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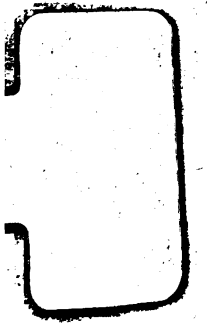

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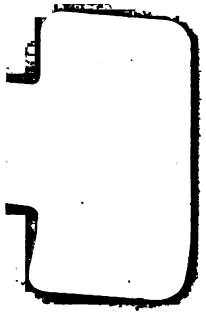

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OLD COURT LIFE IN SPAIN

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BY

FRANCES MINTO ELLIOT

AUTHOR OF "OLD COURT LIFE IN FRANCE," "DIARY OF AN IDLE WOMAN IN ITALY, SICILY, AND SPAIN," ETC., ETC.

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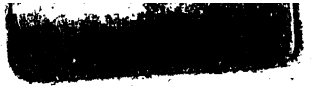

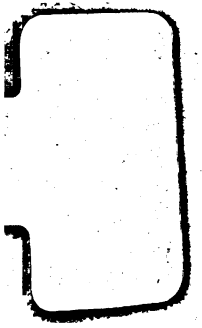

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OLD COURT LIFE IN SPAIN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

How great is Spain! How mighty! From the rugged mountains of the Asturias, their base washed by stormy waves, and the giddy heights of the Pyrenean precipices—an eternal barrier between rival peoples—to the balmy plains of the South, where summer ever reigns! A world within itself, with a world's variety! "*Quien dice España dice todo!*"

And its history is as varied as the land. First, according to the legend, Hercules set his pillars, or "keys"—the *ne plus ultra* of land and sea—on the rock of Calpe (Gibraltar) in Europe, and on Abyle (Ceuta) in Africa. And, that no one should doubt it, he placed his temple on the water-logged flats, half-sea, half-land, behind Cadiz, long remembered by the Moors as the "*district of Idols*," near the city of Gades, where Geryon dwelt, from whom Hercules "lifted" that troop of fat oxen which he was destined so long to drive wearily about the earth. In

memory of all which Charles the Fifth, the great Emperor, carried Hercules' pillars on his shield, with the proud motto: "*Ne plus ultra*," and the city of Cadiz (Gades) still bears them as its arms.

Then, tradition past, came invaders from the earliest times, Celts, Phœnicians, and Greeks, driving the Iberians from their rightful lands. The Carthaginians, too, crossed from Africa along the southern coast, and settled at Cartagena, which still bears their name.

The Romans next appeared, victorious under Pompey and Cæsar, spreading over Spain, but especially powerful at Seville, Cordoba, Toledo, Segovia and Tarragona, where they have left their mark in mighty monuments.

A race of uncivilized warriors followed from the north, so powerful that two Roman Emperors perished in battle with them. Of the precise seat of the Gothic nation it is hard to speak with certainty. It is however known that they came from the extreme north, spreading to the borders of the Black Sea, into Asia Minor in the east, and to the south of Spain in the west. They are mentioned by Pliny, about sixty years before Christ, and later by Tacitus, who twice refers to them as "Gothones." There were so many tribes, Visigoths, Astrogoths, Gepidœ, and even Vandals, that their story is as a tangled web, mixed with that of all nations, but it is clear that those who concern our present purpose came down into Spain from Narbonne and Toulouse.

It is strange how soon these savage northmen discarded their wooden idols, Woden, Thor and Balder,

the gods of thunder and of the sun—so that when Constantine the Great christianized the world, the Gothic chief Wulfila was ready to become a convert. Who this Wulfila was, and how he came to be at Constantinople, is not clear. As Bishop of the Goths he returned to missionarize his countrymen, the Dacian tribes, in the mighty plains of Philipopolis (A.D. 310-314), and made a translation of the Bible into Gothic. Even in our own day something of this precious manuscript remains, beautifully written in letters of gold on purple vellum, at the Swedish University of Upsala.

From the earliest times the Goths had a rude alphabet (Runes), which Wulfila increased, with letters closely resembling English, in his translation of the Scriptures.

Rude indeed! The letters were formed by staves on wooden boards, but all the same were destined to become most ornamental. Gothic letters are still in use for decorative purposes. Numerous Gothic manuscripts exist, written in these picturesque characters, and the inscription over the portal of Pedro el Cruel at the Alcazar at Seville is in Gothic. To this day too, in the Muzaraba Chapel, under the eastern tower of the Cathedral of Toledo, the service is celebrated according to the Christian rite from Gothic missals, dating from the time of King Recaredo.

. . . . . .

The line of Gothic rulers in Spain lasted for nearly two centuries and a half. No less than thirty kings succeed each other in that period, most of whom died either by violence or in battle.

Alaric, "the scourge of God," never came into Spain, but Eurico, his immediate successor, did. Eurico was the greatest warrior of his time, and so versed in Christian polemics that he insisted on the entire nation becoming Arians like himself. Nothing but the close contact of the Goths with that hotbed of heresy, Constantinople, can account for a semi-barbarian indulging in a choice of divers forms of doctrine, nor for the power the Gothic bishops arrogated to themselves after the precedent of the eastern prelates up to the time of Witica. Like the Greek patriarchs they were mixed up in every political intrigue, conspiracy and revolution; made and unmade kings at their pleasure, and greatly influenced the ecclesiastical world by the decrees of their councils at Toledo. The Goths were, indeed, for ages a priest-ridden nation, and the names of their great archbishops have come down to us as landmarks in the land.

So high did party feeling run between Arians and Orthodox that Leovigildô caused his only son to be executed because he had called an Arian bishop "a servant of the devil," and refused to "communicate" with him. Yet Leovigildô was a great king according to his lights, sat on a raised throne among his long-haired chiefs, and had money coined in his name bearing an effigy of himself. Even now a dim halo of the pomp of the Basileus seems to shine around him, as we picture him wearing the Gothic crown, clothed in an ermine mantle, with the purple sandals of empire on his feet.

How early is the religion of peace turned to strife! We are in the sixth century among a

new race, and already the flames of persecution are blazing. Two parties divide the kingdom, "the *bigots*" and "the *Romanisers*," degenerate Goths, who aspire in dress and manners to ape the culture of Byzantium, as opposed to the cloddish habits of the "*bigots*," content to know how to master a horse, draw the long bow, launch the javelin and follow their king to battle. Whether this type of original Goth would have brought back the worship of Thor and Woden does not appear. At least under these idols there was unity; the sacrifice of human victims formed a convenient method of getting rid of prisoners, and the temporary altars among migratory tribes, served by male and female priests, were simple and convenient.

But Recaredo, on his accession, settled the question by becoming (like the mass of his subjects) a Catholic, after a synod of sixty-seven bishops, held at Toledo, had solemnly decided in favour of the orthodoxy of that Church. Perhaps his religious divergences might not have been so unquestioningly accepted, had he not defeated King Gouteran and 60,000 Franks. A Goth must know how to fight, or he was nothing; and thus it came to pass that the theology of a commander, brave enough to hurl destruction on his foes, was thankfully accepted.

Unlike the majority of his predecessors, Recaredo died in his bed (A.D. 601), applauded by all men for his wisdom in completing the union of the conquered Iberians with the Goths, and forming what was destined to become the future kingdom of Spain.

. . . . . .

Eleven kings pass, and now (A.D. 680) Recesvinto, whom all men loved, son of Chindavinto, lies dead upon a bed of state, raised on a dais, draped with purple hangings; the four pillars of the canopy are plated with sheets of gold, and a crown formed by strings of jewels, depending from a circlet set with uncut stones, hangs over his head.

So bushy and matted is his hair—worn in the fashion of the Goths, in long loose curls—and so thick his beard, that the sunken features of the good old king are almost hidden. For twenty-three years Recesvinto had reigned in peace, and now he lies in honoured death, while gathered around him is such pomp as the nation possesses of golden crome and kingly insignia; ermine-lined robe, and silken vest, sandals and buskins laced with gold, the baton of command and the Gothic sceptre long borne in battle by their kings.

The vaulted chamber in which he lies in the castle of Gerticos is lined with planks of shining pine, on which some rude embroidery is stretched. The hollowed roof is formed of thick beams and rafters, and huge fire-places flank either end, filled now with strong smelling herbs, rosemary and wild myrtle, lavender and thyme, loose sprigs of which, with yew and cypress, are strewn on the rudely worked counterpane which covers the corpse. Broadswords with huge hilts are crossed upon the walls, along with solidly embossed shields and heavily-topped lances, the implements of the chase, and skins of wolves and deer, which have fallen by the prowess

of those royal hands, now lying white and cold in death, crossed on his breast, clasping a crucifix! Saddles too, and the silver trappings of his war-horse, are there, and Runic bracelets, collars and buckles; all the paraphernalia of a Gothic chief, come down from Dacian ancestors, ranged on tables full in the crimson rays of the setting sun, streaming through the small bars of the uncurtained casements, and illuminating each detail in flickering patches as of flame.

On an oaken bench an altar has been raised to receive his last confession, devoutly made, as he felt death approaching. The Eucharist is still present in a jewelled box, the cup, platter, and crucifix, while priests and acolytes, in stoles and copes, offer up silent prayers for his departed soul. Clouds of incense darken the room and mount into the lofty vaulting of the roof in huge shadowy masses, which to the superstitious mind might shape into the outlines of dead Gothic kings, hovering over the form of the royal brother who has joined them in the world beyond.

Around the chamber are gathered the warriors and chiefs who have followed him in battle, habited in the full loose garments of peace, bound in with girdles and waistbands. Tall, strong men, with blue eyes and fair skins, who, by their dress, might be mistaken for Roman senators, save for the pervading colour of their abundant hair, passing from every tint of pale straw colour to a dull red, their bare arms circled with bracelets and amulets, on which, spite of Christian doctrine, charms and cabalistic signs are engraved.

Chief among them stands Hilderic, Governor of Nîmes (for the south of France up to the centre is Gothic), a massive, large-limbed man of brutal courage, whose life has passed in feuds and battles with Franks and Basques, never hesitating at any act of cruelty that would extend his power. A fierce crimson hue is on his broad face from constant exposure, and there are scars on neck and cheek, calculated to inspire sympathy with his courage, if his ferocious expression did not turn them rather into a cause of dread. Beside him stands Gunhild of Maguelonne, a turbulent soldier of inferior position, wanting in the authority assumed by Hilderic.

Both these ambitious chiefs have been intriguing for the crown, as Recesvinto grew old, hating each other bitterly while he lived, and now that he is dead, bearing themselves with an irreverent indifference painful to behold, talking in loud whispers to those about, and laughing at rude jokes, specially Hilderic, who stands apart stroking the head of a favourite wolf-dog of gigantic size.

Beside them is a Greek, Paul by name, who has made his way into favour by extraordinary valour. Of his origin no one is certain; of polished exterior, his superior civilization is apparent in manners and in dress, much more gaudy and ornate than that of the rest. A mantle of fine blue cloth falls in ample folds about his graceful form, with a certain oriental amplitude easy to distinguish, and in his hand he carries a scarlet cap.

Paul is to head a revolution by and by, under Hilderic; then, unsuccessful, to be dragged by the

hair of his head (*more Gotico*), between two horses —friends and allies to-day, mortal enemies to-morrow—such is the custom of these chiefs, often incited by the rancour of the women, who appear in history as, if possible, more bloodthirsty than the men.

Aëtius is there also, and Turismundo and Sisenanth, all mighty nobles, and placed modestly behind a noble Goth, verging into years, noticeable for the merciful disposition expressed in his wrinkled face; Wamba is his name, the friend of the oppressed and of the tillers of the soil, poor slaves whom no man heeds—even of the Jews, whom he insists upon treating as members of the great human family; a brave, determined man of the old Dacian type, notable among the fiery spirits around. As he has great possessions, to which he attends himself, he is known as "the farmer," in derision of his simple tastes. Wamba is no kinsman to Recesvinto, but a whisper has gone forth that he is destined to succeed him. The Church, at that time most powerful, favours him, and he is the only chief present whose record is free from crime. Many and many a time he has fought shoulder to shoulder with the king who now lies dead. To him the funeral chamber brings a genuine sorrow—not even pretended by the rest—and as he gazes on the features of his friend, tears rise and moisten his eyes.

Behind Wamba stands his beloved follower, Ervig, a youth whose olive-complexioned face and clear brown eyes show alien blood. His mother, a Gothic princess, was kinswoman to King Chindavinto, but his father was a Greek. As yet no one

reads the unscrupulous ambition of his soul. Indeed, he hardly realizes it himself. Crime lies often dormant in seemingly innocent natures, until occasion discovers it. The evil spirit within him is to be developed by the indulgence of his patron Wamba, who, unknowingly, is warming a serpent in his breast.

All present fall back as Julianus, the Archbishop of Toledo, enters. He has hurried from Toledo to be present ere the old king breathed his last. But death waits for no man. As he enters the homely chamber of death with an overwhelming majesty of look and manner, his cold, impassive glance dominates them all. Nor is the dignity of costume wanting. His monastic mantle is secured at the neck by a golden clasp, and drapes heavily about him; the sleeves of his tunic are lined with precious fur. On his finger is the pastoral ring, and from his neck is suspended a jewelled cross. A dress at once simple and costly, answering to the imperious expression of his face, looking out from the folds of a dark silken cowl, which falls back from his head, his deeply-sunk eyes taking in at a glance all the details around him.

Julianus is the foremost prelate in learning and power the Goths ever had. Next, indeed, in historical importance to Isidor of Seville, though much earlier in point of date; his influence and preponderance are at this time supreme. Possibly he was by birth a Jew, though early attached to the Chapter of Toledo. A churchman of great literary gifts, restless, unscrupulous, ambitious; the very Hildebrand of those early times, who raised the

see of Toledo to a position of unparalleled supremacy, presiding during his life at various councils most important in the history of the mediæval church.

The archbishop is attended by his secretary, a lay brother, habited in black, carrying papers, who (as reflecting the tyranny of his master) stands, without daring to raise his eyes, more like an automaton than a living man.

The only one whom the archbishop condescends to notice among the assembly is Wamba, who holds himself somewhat apart from the rest. He at once singles him out and salutes him with a profound obeisance, which Wamba, without evincing any surprise, returns in silence.

To look on the face of the dead is a duty among these savage races, who believe that the soul of the departed lingers for a while about its tenement of clay. But there is another and more powerful incentive which has assembled these chiefs from the far-off provinces of the kingdom.

Round the bed of the dead king they stand to choose his successor. Absolute silence reigns. Each man is jealous of his neighbour, and convinced that his own claims will prevail. Especially is this the case with Hilderic, who has a secret compact with the Jews fled from oppression in the south of Spain to his government of Narbonne, and he knows that they will gladly furnish him with funds to harass the Christian nobles.

At last the voice of the archbishop is raised to break the strange hush around.

"Chiefs and nobles of the Gothic nation," he

says, in a tone of authority, while all eyes are fixed on him, "the king who lies here reigned in peace according to the Gospel. I am not come to make his funeral oration. All present know his good deeds and the moderation of his rule. For twenty-three years the sword of the Goth has rested in the scabbard. But this calm cannot continue. An able man must succeed him. One"—and as he spoke the silken cowl fell altogether back, displaying the powerful lines of his tonsured head, the broad intellectual brow and the erectness of command—"One, I say, alone is worthy, and that is Wamba. He has no enemies."

As a long-drawn breath of eager expectation looses itself with a distinct note of relief, so did a low sound pass through the death chamber as Julianus spoke. On every countenance came an expression of astonishment, but it was astonishment unmixed with opposition or anger. A relief indeed to pent-up feelings, which finally found vent in a burst of loud applause, each man falling back instinctively to where Wamba had placed himself at the foot of the bed. Then, as with one voice, came the response,—

"Yes, Wamba! He shall be our king!"

"But," cries Wamba, his wrinkled face working with emotion, as he advanced quickly to where Julianus stood, "my consent is needful to this proposal. Now I refuse it. I am not of an age to rule over my valorous countrymen. I am old, I am unworthy. The strength of my arm is gone. I am unfit to lead the dauntless Goths to battle."

"Then rule over them at home," is the short

rejoinder of the archbishop. "In a nation of soldiers a peaceful sovereign is best. You are great in wisdom, O Wamba! Recesvinto was no warrior, and we are here to mourn his loss."

"Yes," replies Hilderic, secretly rejoiced at the choice of Julianus, as from the age of Wamba he will have time and occasion to complete his treacherous plans before the new king's probable death, for to Hilderic Wamba appeared an aged visionary, easy to be put aside when opportunity was ripe, a convenient stop-gap for a time—"Yes, Wamba, you are the only man we will accept without bloodshed."

"Impossible!" cries Wamba, his cheeks reddening with anger. "I will accept nothing which I cannot righteously fulfil. I am unfit to reign."

"No, no!" exclaims Ervig, casting his arms about his patron's neck and affectionately saluting him. "Goodness and wisdom are the best, and those are yours, dear master."

"We *will* have you! Speak! Consent!" came as one word from the circle of nobles. "You dare not refuse the will of the chiefs," cry all, gathering round him, each more or less approving the choice on the same grounds as did Hilderic, or as considering Wamba an easy ruler, under whom every man would be his own master. Already the brows of some begin to darken at his continued refusal.

"Choose some younger man," he persists, struggling from the hands which are now laid on him; "one better fitted for the arduous duties of your king. Look at me," and he raises his grey

locks and bares his furrowed forehead, "I am long past my prime." As he speaks he is retreating as best he can towards the door, when the fiery Hilderic, seizing him with one hand, with the other brandishes a naked spear.

"Look you, Wamba," says he, a dangerous fire kindling his eye, "you shall never leave this chamber, save as a dead man, or as our king."

"Dead, or as our king," came as a war-cry from all the fierce Goths, closing round him with such unseeming shouts and din, that it seemed as if their rude clamour must disturb the last sleep of the dead whose presence all had forgotten.

"You accept the crown in the sight of God?" demands the archbishop in a solemn voice, stretching forth his hands towards Wamba, who, perceiving that further opposition was useless, bows his head. "Then at this altar let us offer up our thanksgivings. The Church is with you, Wamba." And Julianus turns to the oaken table on which stands the Host, and falling upon his knees, with the priests and acolytes around, followed by all those fierce spirits quelled for an instant by the might of his power.

"And," says Wamba, as last of all that assembly he slowly bends his knee in the place of honour reserved for him next to the archbishop, "countrymen! let your prayers be for me also, that I may not be deemed unworthy!"

Again the incense rose in shadowy clouds, filling the chamber with strange outlines. Again the voices of the priests rise and fall, and human

interests are lulled for a while in the presence of the dead king. Again the chiefs remember for a brief moment his just and tranquil reign, and many prayers are recited with apparent fervour for the repose of his soul.

. . . . . .

Within nineteen days after the election of his successor, Recesvinto was buried and Wamba crowned by Julianus in the Cathedral of Toledo. All Spain was jubilant, for he was a blameless man; indeed a fond remembrance yet clings to his name at Toledo. The words "*Tiempo del Rey Wamba*" still point to some lingering impression of national prosperity and of a time of plenty, answering to the days of the "Saxon kings" in England. And Wamba was indeed no imbecile, or weak-handed in war, as Hilderic and his friend the Greek Paul pretended, when, helped by the Jews, they broke into rebellion. He was a warrior indeed, who, though old, could lead the Goths to victory and punish his enemies by slaughter and torture as was the habit of his nation. After which "the Farmer King," as he was affectionately called, to indicate his simple tastes and care for the neglected serfs, returned to Toledo to enjoy his triumph, descending the hill to the cathedral, through the narrow streets, much as we see them now, followed by a long procession of captive Basques with shaven heads, a signal mark of humiliation to the abundant-haired Goths (the rebel Paul, in impious mockery, decorated with a leather crown, stuck on his head with melted pitch, and a sceptre of reeds in his hand), to be received by the Archbishop Julianus under the

sculptures of the Gate, at the head of his clergy.

But the decline of native valour had gone too far for any single man to stem the downward tide. The free constitution of the Nomad tribes had given place to a military despotism, alternating with, and controlled by, a bigoted priesthood. The tremendous superiority of Julianus delayed for a time this downward course, but could not arrest it. Even his iron will could not stop the *decadence* of a nation. Each chief—or duke (*dux*)—was king in his own district, and free to lead a life of idleness and crime. If the Goths still fought well, it was only against each other, or when pressed by necessity to arrest the inroads of the Franks, a much more masculine nation than themselves.

In the south, the Moors were eagerly watching for some chance of crushing out the Northmen. At home, the Jews, persecuted, ill-treated and numerous, were ready to join with every rebel, and to welcome any invader, while, in spite of the efforts of the king, the freedmen, sunk in hopeless slavery, tilled the land for their masters and lived like the beasts of the field. All who possessed more than themselves or who amassed riches were exposed to the envious rapacity of the nobles.

Thus the nation was threatened with destruction on all sides, yet so short-sighted and effete had the Goths become, that, deluded with the semblance of a false peace, they lived as they listed, unconscious of the ruin gathering around.

For a time all went well with Wamba. The vigour of his government had been a surprise to

those who had elected him, to none more than the archbishop himself, who little expected to find a ruler of such determination in the modest-minded chief. No woman swayed his councils, neither wife, daughter nor leman. All his love was centred in Ervig, whom he constantly advanced step by step to fresh honours and commands. So much was Wamba beloved by the people and nation, that the erudite but ambitious Julianus, still hoping to govern him with courtly flattery, wrote his panegyric in the "*Storia Wamba,*" extolling him as the pattern of a Christian hero; and Ervig, who had developed into a subtle statesman, greatly favoured by the archbishop, helped him to turn the elegant sentences.

When Julianus had declared on Wamba's election that "the Church was with him," it was in the belief that he was dealing with a weak old man whom he could blindly lead. He never dreamed that he would dare to touch the privileges of his order. Perhaps Wamba thought so himself before power imposed duties on his conscience. But when he insisted on keeping the clergy in check, and exercised his prerogative in enacting new laws of reform, Julianus secretly resolved on his destruction. Imbued with the spirit of the Roman pontiffs, he would permit no meddling of the secular arm with his authority. Even the king, according to Julianus, must submit to the decrees of the great councils which he, as archbishop, was so fond of calling together, and which were destined to make his name famous throughout the world.

. . . . . .

To effect the downfall of Wamba a tool was

needed, and that tool was Ervig. Striking with a master hand on the baser chords of his nature, vanity and ambition, the relentless archbishop crushed out of him every spark of gratitude and love, and moulded him to his hand as the potter moulds the clay.

"It is for the salvation of the Church of God," whispered Julianus, "a holy deed. It is Wamba who is the Judas, not you, my son," in answer to Ervig's feeble arguments. "Wamba has basely betrayed his master, and must be cast out as a brand to the burning! You are of royal blood, Wamba is but a hireling. Instead of standing as second to the throne, it is your right to mount it, and prove to this backslider that the same hand which crowned him can cast him down."

"But you will spare his life," pleaded Ervig, pricked sorely in his conscience in spite of the casuistry of the archbishop.

"That will be in the hands of the Lord," answered the arrogant priest. "I am but the instrument of the Most High."

Wamba did not live in the fortress over the city of Toledo, the present Alcazar, but in a palace near the church now called Juan de los Reyes, situated on a plateau overlooking the Tagus, and lower down in the town among the citizens. Instinctively he was conscious of a change in Ervig. He shunned him, he was short and reticent in his replies, assumed a haughty indifference to his commands, and so openly opposed the new clerical laws that Wamba severely reproved him. After which a strange thing happened. Wamba fell into a deep sleep, sitting in the hall of his palace, lulled by the ripple of the river

far below; a stupor, rather than a sleep, for he could not be aroused.

"The hand of God is upon him," cried the false Ervig, whom the attendants had summoned. "Call the archbishop. He must not die unshriven."

When consciousness returned, Wamba found himself habited as a monk, with a dark cowl over his eyes, lying on a wooden tressle, more like a bier than a resting-place for a living man. The walls around were bare and discoloured with mildew, a dim uncertain light fell on his face from a narrow window too high in the wall to reveal anything without. A terrible oppression overwhelmed him; he could scarcely open his eyes, and every limb seemed paralyzed.

Whether the sleeping potion administered by Ervig had not been potent enough to end life, or whether the strength of his constitution had resisted its full action, no man will ever know. Gradually, as his senses returned, he understood the treason of which he was the victim. He was in a monk's dress, and, according to the Gothic law, whoever once assumes the ecclesiastical habit is dead to actual life. As far as his kingly office was concerned they might as well have sealed him in a tomb, and read the prayers for the dead over him!

"And Ervig had done this! Ervig!" For he dimly remembered a drink which Ervig had at his request offered him before he fell asleep. In that moment more than the bitterness of death passed over him. Death brings forgetfulness. Wamba's returning senses come with an agonized

recalling of all his former life, out of which rose the image of that one false friend whom he had so loved and trusted. Moment by moment all became clear; Ervig had, during his swoon, clothed him as a monk. He was dethroned!

Suddenly the door of the cell opens, and the stately figure of the archbishop appears. With straight swift strides he advances to where Wamba lay; his priestly robe drooping around him with a heavy patrician grace, his ebon hair falling over his ample brow, a veil to the glittering eyes beneath which burned with an evil fire. Like a phantom he stands over the prostrate king—his form in shadow, sombrely defined against the window, and in an instant all the cell seems to palpitate with life; the walls animate with the expectant eyes of monks placed there to watch the swoon of the king—a dark and sinister background revealed by the scanty light, in which Julianus dominates like some wicked giant about to pounce upon his prey.

Ervig is beside him, standing with averted looks that he might not meet the gaze of Wamba, who still lay with half closed eyes, passively watching the movements of his enemies.

Was it to be life or death? He cared not! A chill as of death curdled his blood. The cell whirled and a mighty darkness reeled down upon him. Wounded to the quick, he would not even condescend to expostulate. Before such base treachery his righteous soul revolted. They had him in their power, let them wreak their will. His life was done, his reign ended. Against the law under which he lay there was no appeal. Shut up in a subterranean prison

how could he communicate with any who might dare to restore him to his throne? It was subtly planned, and by a master mind!

Wamba was, however, the first to break silence. He heaves a deep sigh and opens his eyes, passing his hands slowly over his face, ghastly under the effects of the poison. "You have been a false friend to me," he says, addressing himself, not to the archbishop, but to the muffled figure which stands behind him. "You have returned evil for good. In what have I injured you?" His voice is low, but he speaks with the calmness of one who has already passed the gates of death.

"Accuse not Ervig," answers the archbishop, in a tone of lofty command, placing himself before Wamba, so as to fill with his ample draperies the narrow space of light. "It is the Holy Church in my person you have offended. As an unfaithful son you are cast out. Ervig has but done his duty, for you, Wamba, are a recreant unfit to reign."

"And does the duty of Ervig lead him to succeed me?" asks Wamba, raising himself painfully from the pallet and leaning forward, so that the outlines of his sunken features appear under the cowl.

"It does," answers Julianus, still shielding Ervig from the glance of contempt which shot from the eyes of Wamba.

"It is well," is the answer. "You made me king, Julianus, against my will. Now, against my will, you unmake me. Poor and wretched instrument," he adds, raising his hand towards Ervig, who was crouching in the shadow near the wall, "beware how you cross Julianus. Take example by me, and

let no love for the Goth tempt you to do justice to the people."

"Dare not to question the judgment of God," exclaims the archbishop, an expression of lofty scorn lighting up the evil brilliancy of his deeply sunken eyes. "To Ervig you owe your life. I would have flung you into the fires of purgatory to purify your sinful soul, but his counsels were of mercy."

"I thank him not," replies Wamba. "I am old, and my time in this world is short. I would far rather have sunk into eternal sleep, than lead the life to which you have condemned me."

So deeply moved was Ervig, despite the dignity which awaited him, that he did not reply. His was a weak, unworthy nature, bad, but not wholly depraved. He had been worked upon and warped by the sophistries of the unscrupulous archbishop, which now, in the presence of his benefactor, seemed to lose all their weight. Even his ambition to reign wavered for the moment before his remorse, as one who having braced himself to commit a crime, yet lacks the courage to carry out the measure of his iniquity.

So evident was this, that, full of the fear of what his affection for Wamba might prompt him to do, Julianus brought the interview to an abrupt end. Without another word he passes out of the cell followed by Ervig, and the army of tonsured monks, who had borne Wamba in, now return to watch his gradual return to active life.

The "Farmer King" had, however, many friends. The Goths loved him, and the Jews (a powerful

contingent, richer than all the rest), respected him. So humble was he in peace, so brilliant in war, and under that calm exterior gifted with such energy that he had inspired the State with a new life, as the last great spirit of the old Dacian stock, that Julianus became seriously alarmed, and hastened to call a Council of Bishops to ratify the accession of Ervig to the throne.

The sentence which was passed upon Wamba was thus worded: "As there are some who, being clothed in the garments of penitence when in peril of death; after having recovered claim that the vow is not binding—let all such remember that they are baptized without will or knowledge, and yet no man can remove baptism without damnation; as it is with baptism, so with monastic vows, and we (the Council) declare that all who violate this law are worthy of the severest punishment, and are incapable of holding any office or civil dignity during their natural lives."

By this it would seem that, however the nation clung to the memory of the good old king, yet these once brave and manly warriors had sunk into an incredibly superstitious and priest-ridden nation, fit only to be crushed in the hands of the first bold invader, and that all this internal strife was but as an invitation to the Moors across the Straits, and the Basques in the mountains of the north, to take advantage of their weakness.

Of Ervig it is said that, after a few years passed in vassalage to Julianus, remorse overcame him, and he took to his bed and died.

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Under Witica the Court of Toledo was stained with blood. He was an ignorant, arrogant tyrant, who only understood present advantage to himself. To prevent possible rebellion—and hostile parties were many and ran high, as in preceding reigns—he dismantled the city walls and fortresses, and in his mad eagerness for the security of the throne murdered every kinsman whose life lay within his hand. Particularly was his insane jealousy directed against his cousin Favila, Dux of Cantabria, who was executed, and Witica had prepared the same fate for his son Pelayo, but he escaped to become later on the saviour of his country in driving out the Moors from the north of Spain.

Then his suspicions paid themselves on another kinsman, the Gothic chief Theodofredo. His eyes were put out, and he was imprisoned in the damp vault under the castle of Cordova.

Half Mussulman, and wholly brutal, Witica ingeniously united the vices of both nations—the Iberians and the Goths—and indulged in such a numerous harem as put even the Moors to shame. In vain did the church thunder against this very peccant son. Julianus was long dead. He laughed at the threats of the Pope, and, like his Gothic ancestor, Alaric, threatened to lay siege to Rome.

"Why," cried he, when presiding in the Chapter at Toledo, clothed in his royal robes, the crown and sceptre beside him, in the midst of the trembling canons, who knew it was at their life's peril to venture to contradict him—"Why shall not our Gothic damsels adorn themselves with the jewels of

the Vatican, and our coffers be replenished with the treasury of St Peter's ?"

Incensed at the opposition of the Archbishop Sindaredo, who dared to expostulate with him, he appointed his own brother Opas, at heart as profligate as himself, Archbishop of Seville, to take his seat along with Sindaredo in the episcopal chair of Toledo. (Opas was the most unscrupulous prelate that ever wore the mitre. Even Julianus was his inferior in secular power, for Opas was a prince, born of the old Gothic stock.)

"Since the Church of Toledo will not yield to me, her lawful spouse," said Witica, with savage sarcasm, "she shall, like a harlot, have two husbands—Sindaredo and Opas. No foreign potentate with a triple crown shall preach to *me*."

Witica, bad as he was, is yet entitled to be considered as the first reformer. He promulgated a law freeing the clergy from the vow of celibacy. No threats or anathemas of any mitred Julianus stopped him. No obedience to monkish precepts governed his mind. He revelled in lawless licentiousness, and in outraging the pietism of the time. Of Witica it was said that "*He taught all Spain to sin.*" Naturally the monkish chronicles have unmercifully villified him. Yet there is much of the humoristic coarseness of the middle ages in his character; a grotesque setting at naught of all law and "*convenance*," which the fashion of politer times—not a whit less vile—softened and refined into a *quasi*-elegance perhaps more repulsive.

While the churches are closed under an interdict, the altars bare, the people disarmed, the castles and

fortresses dismantled lest they might harbour enemies, and disorder and sensuality reign unchecked throughout the land, a youthful avenger is growing up in the person of Roderich, son of Theodofredo, now dead, some said *murdered*, in the gloomy dungeons of Cordoba.

Of royal birth, reared and educated among the cultivated Romans, Roderich is not only a brilliant knight, but a master of all the civilization of the age, prompt at all martial exercise, of graceful and polished manners, and eager to avenge the wrongs of his father and of the Goths. Like a meteor, this young hero flashes upon Spain, defeats Witica "the Wicked," in a pitched battle, and imprisons him in the same castle of Cordoba, where his father had lately died. Not a dissentient voice is heard on the battlefield when Roderich, raised on a shield by the soldiers, as was the custom of his ancestors, and standing erect to face the four quarters of the world, is proclaimed King of the Western Goths, in place of the sons of Witica.

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And now we come on the history of the beautiful Moor, Egilona, daughter of the King of Algiers, who was at this time shipwrecked on the coast of Spain at Deina. As the royal vessel grounded on the sand (says the chronicle), the rabble of Deina —and what a rabble, in all ages, is that of Spain, how greedy, how rapacious—rushed into the surf, to capture and make spoil. But the grandeur of the illustrious company assembled on the deck somewhat awed them as they paused with greedy eyes,—men and women, sumptuously attired, facing

them with all the haughtiness of Oriental dignity. In the stern, closely pressed within a circle of her Moslem guards, stood a lovely princess, lightly veiled, her turban ablaze with jewels, and as the vessel heaved in upon the swell, and the mob found themselves close upon the strangers, scimitars flashed and jewelled daggers gleamed. Then some of the older Moors, understanding the helplessness of their position, leapt on shore, and falling on their knees before the alcaide, who stood by, unable to understand the meaning of what he saw, implored his mercy towards a royal princess.

"She whom you behold," said one sumptuously robed African, who seemed to lead the expedition, his brow covered by a green turban, on which glittered an aigrette of inestimable worth, "is the only daughter of the King of Algiers, whom we are conducting to her affianced husband, the King of Tunis. Foul winds, as you see, have driven us on your coast. We were compelled to make for land, or imperil the life of our inimitable mistress. Allah has preserved her. Do you, Señor Alcaide, not prove more cruel than the waves."

The alcaide, a worthy man, much overcome by the magnificence of these sea-borne guests, bowed his head in acquiescence, and called on his alguazils to keep off the crowd. "I will myself conduct your princess to the castle," he replied to the noble Moor who had addressed him. "Let her freely tread the Spanish soil. It shall be to her as safe as the African land of her fathers."

"The castle!" cried the same dazzling Moor

who had already spoken,. stopping the alcaide short. "The castle! You would then treat this regal bride as a captive? By the tomb of the Prophet, Señor Alcaide, you do ill! Know that her ransom will be to you, and to your race for ever, riches incalculable, such as the genii in dreams bear to the faithful—if you deal well with her and let her go."

Another and another of the circle of superbly-robed strangers also spoke.

"All we have is yours, Sir Alcaide."

The fair captive herself held out her hands in supplication towards the excellent magistrate, who stood perplexed, as divided between duty and inclination.

"Will you," she asked, in a soft voice, "imprison one whom the sea has set free?"

In vain! The honesty of this Spanish official is a record to all time. He was a Goth of the old school, and cared neither for jewels nor gold. Much as it moved him to withstand the entreaties of so beautiful a creature, his sense of duty conquered.

"Sir Moslem," he answered, afraid at first to address himself directly to the lady with a churlish refusal, but singling out the illustrious Moor, whose words and presence showed him to be of exalted rank, "and you, fair and virtuous lady, whom the storm has drifted on our shores, greatly does it grieve me to say you nay, but my loyalty to my sovereign, Don Roderich, leaves me no choice. This princess,"—pointing to the lady, who had sunk back fainting in the arms of her attendants, as soon as she was convinced of her failure to move

the alcaide—"is a royal captive, whom chance has landed within the Gothic realm. Don Roderich can alone decide her fate. Within the castle I command let her seek shelter and repose, more I cannot promise."

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To the court at Toledo the beautiful African journeyed, shedding many tears. To the Eastern mind she was a slave, awaiting the will of her new master. Yet it was refreshing to her feelings to be received in every town and castle with royal honours, to be still surrounded by her Moorish court, and to travel mounted on a snow-white palfrey, the wonder and astonishment of all who beheld her. Slave though she was, her head was carried high as one accustomed to receive homage. Her clear, dark eyes, sparkling and mild, shone out under the strongly marked eyebrows of the East, profuse braids of black hair hung loosely about her neck, tinkling with golden coins; a veil of silver tissue was twined about her head, to be drawn over the face and bosom at pleasure, under a turban, to which a diadem was attached, decked with bright feathers; a long tunic, woven in the looms of her country, heavy with pearls, and trousers of a transparent fabric descended to her feet, encased in delicate slippers, a loose mantle of changing silk covering all. Nor was her horse unadorned, an embroidered saddle-cloth swept the ground, the bridle and stirrup were inlaid with gems, and even the shoes were wrought in gold.

At length, high over the wide plains which encircle Toledo, the bulk of a lofty castle rises

to her eyes; the rock on which it stands so hard and defined in outline, it seemed as if nature had planted it there as a pedestal to receive the burden, and to guide the majestic current of the Tagus through solemn defiles round the walls.

There, as now, the Alcazar stands, the servile city grouping at its base in long, flat lines, granite rocks breaking out between, and giant buttresses bordering the deep flood—a sadly-tinted scene, terrible and weird, just touched with burning flecks when the sun sets.

In a deep valley beside the Tagus Egilona rested under a silken pavilion prepared for her, to await the coming of the king. Gloomy were her thoughts on the banks of that rock-bound river, black with granite boulders and rash and hasty in its course. What a country was this, after the exotic landscapes of Algiers, the palmy groves and plantains, the orange and lemon orchards, the ruddy pomegranates and olive grounds, and the deep valleys of the hills? What pale, dismal tints! What stern, sunless skies! Terror struck to Egilona's heart as she asked herself what kind of man this northern king would be who dwelt in that frowning castle? Would those walls enclose her in a life-long prison? or would the dark flood beside her be her grave? Poor Egilona! a captive and a slave! How could she guess the brilliant future before her, when the aspect of nature itself heightened her fears?

Meanwhile, descending by the winding-path which proudly zig-zags down the hill—a glittering cavalcade reaches the archway of the Golden Gate

(a monument formed in all ages for triumphant conquerors to pass through) to defile upon the bridge upheld by many piers. Gothic chiefs, magnificent in glittering armour, lances, heavy embossed casques and gold-inlaid corselets, riding deeply-flanked horses, champing bits of gold—the great princes of the northern court, the magnificent successors of those iron-hearted warriors who had well-nigh conquered the world; mules with embroidered saddle-cloths, and gay litters and arabas furnished with striped curtains for such attendant *demoiselles* as could not ride; gorgeous chariots, too, horsed with battle-steeds and surrounded by archers and spearmen, flags and banners waving in the sun, pages and attendants bright as exotic birds; and last of all, more dazzling than the rest, Roderich himself, clad in crimson robes, active, vigorous and graceful, his face aglow with an excitement which heightened the wondrous beauty of his features.

For such a reputation of comeliness to have come down to us from the eighth century, argues Roderich a royal Apollo indeed; but whether he favoured the raven, or if his curling locks recalled the glow of the dawn, can only be conjectured.

As he draws rein and dismounts before the silken draperies of the pavilion, within which the peerless Egilona rests, his soul is moved with tender expectation. He enters; their eyes meet, and he is struck dumb! That mischievous boy, Cupid, has pierced him with his dart, and then and there he swears a silent oath that Egilona shall be his queen.

"Come to me," he says, in a soft voice, as he

bends on her his glowing eyes. "Come without fear. Let no sorrow cloud that royal brow. Beside me, your path shall ever be made smooth, and a shelter found, where you shall rest alone. As in the court of your father, so shall you be in mine. All I crave is leave to kiss your feet, most incomparable stranger. This favour you will not refuse."

At which Egilona, blushing to the painted henna circles which increased the splendour of her eyes under his ardent gaze, bows her dark head.

Then taking her hand, Roderich, kissing the delicate finger-tips tenderly, forbade her to kneel before him as she desired. With his own hands he mounted her on a palfrey, and accompanies her up the ascent to the castle, where he installs her in the richest chambers facing the sun. And, ever more and more enslaved, the handsome young Goth, amorous by temperament and habit, became dearer and dearer to her, and fainter and fainter grew the remembrance of her African home, and that Tunisian bridegroom she had never seen; until, at last, her dainty lips opened with a "*Yes*," to his entreaties, and Egilona consented to become a Christian and his queen.

Wonderful are the ways of love! All this took place in a brief space. Not only Egilona, but many of her Moorish damsels, wooed by Gothic knights, eloquent with the words of passion, found their arguments so convincing, that they also not only shared in her conversion, but followed her example in marriage.

Happy Egilona! The shops in the Yacatin, the Jews' quarter, and the bales of the African merchants

travelling from city to city, were ransacked for her use. The most precious merchandise, silks, gems, perfumes, and sweetmeats—all that Europe and the East possessed richest and rarest to please a lady's eye, were showered upon her, when Don Roderich led her by the broad marble stairs of the Alcazar into the pillared *patio*, followed by her African retinue, down the steep streets to the Cathedral—very different to what we see it now, though standing on the same spot, and in all ages a fair and stately edifice, said to have been founded by the Virgin herself. Children, according to ancient custom, running before to throw flowers in her path; and bowls filled with uncut jewels and gold coins presented to her by noble youths in silken robes. The wedding chorus sung as she passed by, a poet reciting "How the god of love had wounded the heart of the king," the Archbishop Opas himself meeting them at the great Puerta, and blessing them as they knelt.

Jousts, tournaments and banquets followed; the great chiefs appearing resplendent in burnished armour, embossed and enamelled in the ancient style; nothing too costly for these delicate descendants of the rudely armed Alaric; carpet knights, all plumes and banners and worked scarfs, glittering in and out of silken tents; and revelry and dances presided over by the King and Queen.

For twenty days princes and knights, assembled from all parts of Spain, kept holiday at Toledo. Every tongue declared the dark-skinned Egilona peerless among queens, and Don Roderich the comeliest of the Gothic race. Egilona was adored

by her Christian consort. He turned no more longing eyes upon the venal fair who hitherto had contended for his favour, and the vessel of state glided over a crystal sea to the soft winds of prosperity under a cloudless sky.

The old lays and ballads make Roderich, in the magnificence of his youth, a rival of the Cid Campeador himself. Even his mortal enemies, the Moors, glorify him in their songs sung to the zither under the orange groves of Grenada.

But already the "cloud no bigger than a man's hand" is rising on the horizon, by and by to obscure and darken the sun of his success.

A crown acquired by violence sits uneasily on the usurper's head. Like Witica, Don Roderich was tormented with suspicions of conspiracies and treachery among his powerful nobles. So little did the fate of his ill-starred predecessor teach him wisdom, that he permitted the same fears to haunt him of all who were allied to him by blood. Witica's two sons were banished from Spain, and, to avoid the chance of rebellion, such defences in walls and castles as yet remained were thrown down, and the carefully constructed fortifications of the Romans levelled to the earth. Nor could a rude and warlike race be expected to maintain their early valour in the midst of such luxury and licentiousness as prevailed. For two hundred years the Gothic kings had held Spain by the prowess of their arms, and the simple habits of their forefathers—Ataulf, Sigeric, Theodore, Alaric, Amalaric, and his successors up to the frugal-minded Wamba, the "Farmer King."

Now, under Witica and Roderich, effeminacy and sloth led on to cowardice. The Gothic soldiers who had been galvanized into a temporary show of valour by the recent strife between Witica and Roderich, soon sank back into the inactivity of a wanton court, feasting, dancing, and wassailing in a style more becoming the satraps of an Eastern potentate than the chiefs of a free and generous people. Who could have recognized in these voluptuous youths, who hung about the person of Don Roderich, the descendants of those stern and frugal Teutonic heroes of the north, marching down like thunder-gods to conquer the nations?

Pomp there was, it is true, and splendour, and civilization, and an elegance of manners and of thought unknown before; but the heart of the Gothic nation was cankered at the core, and the warlike Moors, ever on the look-out to snatch from their grasp the fertile Peninsula showing out so fair across the Straits, noted it with joy.

CHAPTER II.

DON RODERICH—GATHERING OF THE CHIEFS—TRIAL OF WITICA.

How strange to think of Cordoba before the Moors, who so imbued it with the spirit of Moslem life! Those famous Caliphs of the rival houses of Mirvan and Ummaija, and the great Abdurraman, whose wealth and luxury reads like a dream; Eastern luxury in banquets under painted domes; odalisques and white-robed eunuchs gliding beneath fretted arches, vaults of alabaster and porphyry; harems with walls shedding showers of jasmine and rose-leaves, the soft breathings of guzla and cither, dark heads crowned with orient pearls, and tissue-robed Sultanas reclining on golden thrones.

"Kartuba the important," the gem of the Carthaginians—ancient when the Gentiles reigned in the time of Moses—possessed in turn by Greeks and Romans, the birth-place of Seneca, Lucan, Averroes and El Gran Capitan Gonsalvo Aguilar de Cordoba; for ages the capital of Southern Spain, —is to be considered exclusively, before the advent of the Moors, as a Roman settlement, the

grandly regular aspect of these masters of the world impressed upon its buildings. Siding with Pompey in the time of the Republic, it was destroyed by the vengeance of Cæsar. Rebuilt by Marcellus and re-peopled by penniless patricians from Rome, it was for a time called "Patricia;" under all names a sober and dignified capital gathered round its ancient castle on the banks of the Guadalquivir.

At all times Cordoba was beautiful; the verdant slopes of the Sierra Morena, rising precipitously from the very gates, look down serenely on the strife of rival peoples; lovely retreats, dotted with white *quintas*, farms, mills, vineyards and olive-grounds; the rugged summits rising westwards to the limits of Lusitania; the lazy Guadalquivir flowing at their base, through grassy plains dark with orange and myrtle

Now what a desolation! A solitary shepherd pipes to his flock, as he passes at the "*Ave Maria,*" on the lonely road; a file of mules, carrying bricks or corn succeed him; a ragged goatherd watches his kids grazing beside the river, and droves of swine burrow in the mould once trodden by the steps of heroes! Two boldly crenelated towers and a portion of the outer walls, rising from an ancient garden of exceeding sweetness, are all that remains of the palace and fortress of the Gothic kings. Thickets of roses and lilacs engulf you as you enter, broad palm leaves shroud decay, and quivering cane-brakes whisper softly of the past. A little to the left rises a lower tower, grey against the sky, another and another; the

stones scarcely held together by entwining ropes of ivy—all that remains of the royal castle.

In the prison beneath, on a level with the Guadalquivir, the noble Theodofredo, father of Roderich, languished, deprived of sight by red-hot irons held before the eyes, a favourite mode of torture, borrowed, like all that is degraded, from the Byzantines. Now Witica, who had commanded this savage act, has taken his place in the same prison, and is to be judged by Theodofredo's son. Wiser had it been, and more merciful, had Roderich foregone this vengeance. But with power had come the savage instincts of his race. The indulgence of his life has already begun to tell on his once generous nature. Little by little, he has fallen from the high position of regenerator of Spain, and, led on by evil counsel and a natural weakness inherent in his nature, has adopted the same false and cruel principles of government which he was called to the throne to reform.

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Within a broad vaulted hall, the high roof supported by carved rafters, the walls hung with tapestry woven with silver thread—in which the stories of Gothic victories are rudely depicted—Roderich sits on a low silver throne. It is shaped like a shield, in remembrance of the early custom of the nomad chiefs, his ancestors, who, when invested with military command, were three times, standing upon a shield, carried round the camp, on the shoulders of stalwart Goths. A rich mantle of purple brocade covers a lightly-wrought cuirass inlaid with gold. The Gothic crown, which has, in the

altered manners of the time, come to be not of iron but of gold, set with resplendent jewels, rests upon his head, almost concealed by luxuriant masses of hair, falling on neck and shoulders, in beard and lovelocks. His buskins are red, like the Eastern emperors', and his feet, shod with pearled sandals, rest on an inlaid footstool. The sceptre lies beside him with his sword, and over his head is a raised canopy of cloth of gold, decorated with inscriptions in Runic characters and quaint devices, come down from early times.

Around are the chiefs and nobles of the nation, gathered from all quarters of Spain—to judge him who lately was their king. All are men of war, habited in the superb but cumbrous armour of the time, before the delicate handling of the Moor turned metal into thin plates of steel, made swords as fine and piercing as needles, and armoury a science.

Nearest to Roderich stands Ataulfo, next in succession to the throne, a generous-hearted youth, full of the old virtues of his nation. With much of the ruddy countenance of the king, he shows his northern origin in the chestnut locks which escape from his burnished cap, and a certain blond fairness in spite of exposure to a southern sun.

Teodomir, a veteran general, comes next; as too rigid a disciplinarian for the degenerate times, he has somewhat fallen into neglect among the younger chiefs who have risen to power with the accession of the king. Teodomir is well past the prime of life, but retains the keen eye and stalwart limbs of youth, as at the head of an army he will show before many years are past. The historic warrior,

Pelistes, is here too, already sunk into the vale of years, but, like Teodomir, strong and ready of hand and purpose, his grizzled hair shading a noble countenance. These two trusty chiefs, who present themselves in the antiquated armour of the Goths, had been close friends of Roderich's father, and were specially active in raising the hasty levies for the battle which placed his son on the throne; spite of which services, as time goes by, they find themselves somewhat disregarded by the young king, who listens to more flattering counsels and secretly laughs at the rustic virtues applauded in the days of Recaredo and Wamba.

The royal lad Pelayo is also bidden, the son of that Favila, Dux of Cantabria, put to death by Witica, when he purposed to slaughter all of his blood. Pelayo stands somewhat back as becomes his youth, for who can guess that this beardless boy, with a smiling, artless face, and full blue northern eyes will, by his fortitude, become the founder of a new race of Gothic kings, and by his endurance and valour raise up a native dynasty in Spain?

A crowd of young courtiers, most careful of the adornment of their persons, fill up the space behind, appareled in long embroidered mantles of many brilliant shades, held in by jewelled cinctures and buckles, elaborately worked caps upon their heads (the first idea of the later *toque* of the Renaissance)—fashions which have taken the place of the short tunic, leather girdle and heavy head-piece of former times.

Beside these stands one on whom all eyes are turned. Stern and composed of aspect, as if

conscious of the possession of such power that he is cautious of displaying it. His name is Julian, and it is he who chiefly seconded the rising in favour of Roderich. Yet this man, Espatorios of Spain, Lord of Consuega and Algesiras, commander of the Goths on the African seaboard, and governor of Ceuta, half royal himself—is a dangerous subject, and a doubtful friend. Why he had supported Roderich is the enigma of the day; he had but to stretch out his hand to seize the crown himself, and with a much more legitimate claim. The ambition of his wife Frandina is well known, and that she chafes at her inferior position, and shuns the Court of Toledo and the royal house since Egilona is the queen; yet, strange to say, Julian, as yet, has never swerved in his allegiance to Roderich. If any dark purpose of treason is brooding in his soul, as yet it appears not. To this time he is faithful, and is now present at Cordoba to judge his own near kinsman Witica for divers misdeeds, but principally for his share in the death of Roderich's father Theodofredo.

What that judgment will be is very plain to see. Rather to behold the wretched tyrant die than to judge him are they all assembled there, for the settled purpose in the mind of Roderich is revenge.

If Julian is an enigma, much more so is his smooth-faced brother-in-law, Opas, Archbishop of Seville, brother of the fallen king, and his aider and abetter in all his vice and cruelty. A very Judas in cunning is Opas, who, with the fall of the supremacy of the Church has, for the sake of power, accommodated himself to the new ideas, and looks out now upon the course of events with a cold eye.

What are his present motives? None can guess. Yet in the fiendish treachery and bitter hatred he came later to display towards Roderich some explanation may be found in the cruel punishment he inflicted on his unfortunate brother. But the present unnatural compliance of Opas, even in these rough days, is looked on with disgust. There he stands, however, scornfully indifferent to what men think, clothed in a rich cope and jewel-adorned dalmatica, a double tiara on his head, resplendent with gems, for as he is in the presence of one king, to judge another who has worn the crown, Opas has arrayed himself in the splendid paraphernalia of his double office of Archbishop of Seville and of Toledo. Attended by two deacons he presents the very picture of the Prelate of the day, ready to lead in war, or govern in peace; a cross upon his neck, his waist girded with a sword, and his feet cased in steel.

More than anyone else present, however, the royal lad Pelayo, for whom so romantic a future is in store, is personally interested in the punishment of Witica, the murderer of his father; yet the composure of his face and the carelessness of his attitude, as he leans against one of the columns that uphold the raftered roof, is as if he were but one among the many. Outwardly he betrays no consciousness of his great wrong. Death and torture are familiar to the Gothic mind, and, like the rest, he appears prepared to abide by the judgment of the king.

The heavy hangings shrouding the southern entrance to the hall are drawn aside, and, with a

rush of sunshine and scent of aromatic herbs and odorous flowers, Witica appears, led in by slaves, heavy chains clanking at his feet, and manacles binding his arms. Common woollen garments of a dark colour cling to his emaciated frame, and his long, unkempt hair streams down to his waist. So greatly is he changed that it is almost impossible to recognize the lineaments of the jubilant and gross-featured voluptuary in this thin, care-ravaged face. As he slowly approaches the throne upon which Roderich is seated, he stops abruptly. The rude guards on either side push him on, and weighted by the grasp of the fetters he falls helplessly forward on his knees. Thus he remains motionless. No friendly hand is outstretched to help him—the miserable king. Not a single eye in that assembly softens with a pitying glance.

A wan, craven look comes over his face as he raises his eyes beseechingly to the superb young monarch who has taken his place—so miserable an object, that whatever were his crimes it seems impossible he can inspire now anything but pity. But Don Roderich thinks otherwise; he contemplates the wretched figure before him with a stern glance. Then, turning to the assembled chiefs and addressing himself more specially to Julian, standing as sword-bearer at the right of the throne, he speaks in a hard, resonant voice:

"In this man you behold the butcher of my father. To amuse his caprice, he put out his eyes and imprisoned him in the dungeon of this castle until, worn out by suffering, he died. My father," he repeated, in a ringing voice, which

sounds hollow in the vast bare hall, "the noble Theodofredo, whose only crime was being born near the throne."

As he spoke there was so cruel an echo in his voice, the miserable Witica shivers and cowers still lower on the floor. Never possessed of much intelligence it would seem as if the long imprisonment and certainty of death has deadened within him the little sense he has. Dragged from the darkness of a dungeon into the full light of day, before the varied pageant of a court once his own, his brain has become confused. A dreadful horror is all he feels.

"What punishment," continues Don Roderich, "think you, noble Goths, most revered archbishop, and brother chiefs, should be inflicted on him for this death, and all the evil he has wrought in Spain?"

"My lord," replies Julian, bowing low, apparently unmoved by the miserable object grovelling before him, "that is a personal matter, which you alone can decide. The wrongs of a father are the wrongs of his child."

"That is my mind also," briefly spoke the veteran Teodomir. "And mine—and mine," ran round the warlike circle, to whom the soft attribute of mercy was unknown—"blood calls for blood, Such is the law of our ancestors."

Loud, too, in assent was heard the voice of Pelistes, moved to something like feeling, as the image of his friend, the noble Theodofredo, rises to his mind, condemned to a slow death within the very castle in which they stand. For the shifting of the Gothic Court to Cordoba, for the trial of

Witica on the very spot where Theodofredo suffered, was indeed a master-stroke on the part of Roderich to heighten to the utmost pitch of intensity not only the acuteness of his own vengeance, but the sanguinary passions of the Goths.

While each noble gives assent, the young Pelayo grew very pale. Was not Favila, his father, lord of the wide district of Cantabria, on the iron-bound coast, besides the range of the Asturian mountains, a northern king in all but the name? Was not Favila also cruelly put to death. And had not Witica sought to lay his murderous hands on him also? Yet no man heeded. The death of Favila had passed unnoticed, and Roderich, at best but a usurper, and Roderich's wrongs are alone in every mouth! Too young to remonstrate with these elder chiefs, the heart of Pelayo chafes in silent indignation, and he swears to himself that if he lives, the day shall come when ancient Iberia shall ring with the forgotten name of his sire!

"And you, most venerable archbishop," continues Roderich, turning to address himself to Opas, who, as if some claim of kindred had sounded at his heart, had further withdrawn himself when Witica appeared, and stood so placed as to conceal the view of the pathetic spectacle before him—"you who, by your presence here this day, give us so signal a proof of your loyalty, what seems to you just in this matter, so closely touching yourself? We would willingly carry the Church with us. Speak your mind freely, nor let our royal presence in aught prejudice the prisoner."

"My lord," answers Opas, in a voice which, spite of his efforts to steady it, still sounded scarcely in its natural tone, "my vote lies with my kinsman, Julian. In a matter so nearly concerning myself as a brother's life and death, it fitteth best for me to be silent."

Something in the familiar tones of his voice, some subtle affinity of blood betwixt brother and brother, struck the dull sense of Witica. As Opas spoke he raised his head, and, as he seemed to listen, a sickly smile played for a moment about his sunken lips, and a more human expression passed into his eyes. Listening, listening eagerly, as if expecting some help, a wistful gleam of hope striking across the depths of blank despair, his glance swept upwards with a pleading impotency terrible to behold, the vibration as it were of some subtle instrument set mysteriously in motion. Watching for what was to come with open mouth and anxious eyes, thus he remained some time, then gradually the tension ceased, the heavy eye clouded, the jaw dropped, and the head, with its shaggy, unkempt locks, freely mixed with grey, once more sank hopelessly on his breast. All this occupied but the space of a few minutes.

Don Roderich spoke once more. "Witica," says he, lowering his eyes to the level of the prostrate king, "you have heard the judgment of your kinsmen and those who were your former subjects. What have you to answer?"

An inarticulate sound breaks the silence. Witica makes a feeble effort to raise himself in the arms of the slaves, who had never withdrawn their hold,

opens his mouth to answer, and then falls back speechless.

The Goths were ever a people cruel and savage in their laws, but so terrible a spectacle as that one, lately monarch in the land, should have fallen into such a strait might have touched even the heart of an enemy, how much more kinsmen so nearly allied to him? But it was not so, neither did any generous impulse move the king from his cruel purpose. With the kindling eye of vengeance Roderich contemplates what was left of that Witica whose kingdom he had seized, and proceeds to give sentence in clear, ringing tones, audible in every corner of the hall.

"Let the evil Witica has wrought on others be visited on himself. The eyes of my father Theodofredo were put out by his order, even so be it done with him. In the same dungeon here at Cordoba, where my father died, shall his life end. Away with the prisoner."

The sounds of approval which follow these words, especially from the group of young courtiers, serve in some sort to drown the piercing shrieks which break from Witica when his dulled senses grasp the full meaning of the sentence. Quick as thought he is borne away, and the spot where he had laid is rapidly covered by the feet of the crowd of chiefs and princes who gather in groups in front of the throne.

With a careless laugh Roderich descends the marble steps on which the throne was placed, and placing his crown in the hands of a daintily appareled page, moves freely about among his

nobles. The friends of his father, Pelistes and Teofredo, coming from Murcia, are specially greeted. To the Archbishop Opas he again addresses himself with the studied courtesy he had learned in civilized Italy. But again Pelayo is passed over in silence, an affront which calls up a flush of anger on his face, as he silently turns and leaves the hall. At last, singling out Julian, Roderich moves aside under the range of the low pillars which divided the hall.

"This judgment," says he, speaking with caution, "relieves my mind of much care. Witica has been condemned by those of his own blood. Brother, brother-in-law and kinsmen have joined together to make secure my position on the throne. The dam indeed is scotched, but what of the lambkins? Witica will be executed forthwith, but his sons remain. Where are they? While they live the kingdom will never be safe from traitors."

"Have no fear, my lord," answers Julian, who, through all this painful scene seemed to be lost in the contemplation of the expression of the king, as a student pores over the page of a precious manuscript the sense of which may escape him by its obscurity. What manner of man is this they had chosen, he was asking himself? Was Roderich as ferocious as he seemed? Or was his conduct but the effort of a vacillating mind to play the tyrant to excess, conscious of an inherent weakness? And as he watched him, a feeling of deadly hatred came over him for the commission of the very act of cruelty he had just sanctioned. But his answer to

Roderich's question was as unmoved as though no hostile sentiments were warring within him.

"The youths are already fled to Africa, my lord, where the Spanish Governor of Tangiers harbours them out of gratitude to their father. Let them rest, they will not trouble you."

"You say well, count," answers Roderich in a light tone; "vengeance for my father was a duty. For a while we will grant them life, but later they must pay the forfeit of Witica's crimes. But now to other matters. How fares the Lady Frandina, your virtuous consort, and the young Florinda, whom report extols as beautiful beyond measure?"

The manners of the king were frank and soldierly, and history records that he possessed to a great degree that winning demeanour which charms in the high ones of the earth. To Julian, whose powerful aid had mainly helped him to the possession of the crown, he had hitherto shown a deference that flattered while it controlled. To Don Roderich's question Julian answered with a smile: "It is well with my consort, who is at our Castle of Algesiras; she bade me greet your grace. As to my daughter, it was of her I was about to speak. Florinda is with me in Cordoba. I have brought her as a fair present and hostage to your bride, Queen Egilona, to attend on her, along with the other noble damsels of the court, and to learn those lessons of virtue and excellence in which she is paramount. Will you, my lord, be my surety with the queen?"

"That will I, gladly," answers Don Roderich, his countenance lighting up with a gracious smile.

"The confidence which you repose in me is of all else the crown and proof of your loyalty. As such I accept it. To me Florinda shall be as a daughter. I will watch over her as yourself, and see that she is trained in the same rigid principles of piety which honour her mother's name."

Julian, his pale, olive-skinned face flushed with the gratification these words afford, bows low. "Florinda," he replies, "is but a timid girl brought up by her mother's side, as yet unacquainted with the state which fittingly surrounds Queen Egilona. You will pardon her inexperience; she is quick and sensitive of nature, and keen to appreciate kindness. It is by her wish that she will attend the queen; I have but followed her own desire. Her mother indeed consented, but unwillingly, to part with her."

"This is welcome news. It is as a shaft which tells both ways, in the sentiment of attachment in which she has been reared, and of the mind of the fair maid herself. No parents shall be tenderer or more careful than we to her. Would that I had a son to match with her in marriage."

"And now," says Julian, making a low obeisance, "I will crave to be permitted to withdraw; my presence is demanded in my government. The Moors have received considerable reinforcements, and advance upon Ceuta from the neighbouring hills. By way of Damascus they come, despatched by Almanzor from Bagdad, called by those unbelievers 'The sword of God.' Our Gothic province on the margin of the Straits needs vigorous and constant watching."

"And it is for that reason," is Roderich's reply,

"that I have placed the government in your hands, valiant Espatorios, first and most trusted of all my Gothic chiefs."

"I will do my duty, my lord," is the rejoinder. "You need, I trust, no assurance of this; but, spite of precautions, I fear greatly that a battle or a siege is imminent. The Moslems are gathered in such numbers, savage tribes of Arabs and Berbers, under the Moorish general, Mousa ben Nozier of Damascus, and his son Abd-el-asis, that it will need all our resources to baffle. Mousa swears that he will drive the Cross from the confines of Africa, and raise the crescent on every Christian fortress we hold in Tingitana."

"This is a confirmation of evil news," replies Don Roderich, whose beaming countenance had darkened as Julian gave these details. "I am well advised of the concentration of the Arabs in the north of Africa. I but awaited your coming to confirm it. But had you not been present with the archbishop it would have been argued in the nation that as his relative you disapproved my sentence. Now we are hand in hand. Command all the resources of the mainland to drive the invaders back. Light sloops can be run from Algeciras to Ceuta with soldiers and arms."

"My lord, I have enough; should a siege be threatened every mouth has to be fed. But it is to me, the leader, that the Christians look. It is I who am needed on the coast of Barbary. I have personally too, great credit with the Moors; they are noble enemies."

"I doubt it not," is Roderich's answer. "Wherever my trusty Espatorio draws the sword, victory follows.

"My lord, it was but to excuse my hasty parting, not to ask for more supplies, that I spoke. To know that my daughter is well disposed of in a safe asylum is a balm to me greater than any boon you could bestow. My wife, Frandina, fights by my side. I have no fear for her, and our son is consigned to the care of the Archbishop Opas. Now, thanks to you, my lord, I am free-handed to face the Moors. I have but to settle some matters connected with Florinda, and to depart. The queen is at Toledo, I must accompany her thither."

"By no means," cries Don Roderich, "unless such is your wish. She shall go with me, accompanied by suitable attendants. I myself will present her to Egilona as our child."

Meanwhile, the assemblage had gradually diminished. Each chief was in haste to depart, for the country was full of enemies, more especially in the south and east, where the vessels of the Moors continually landed Berbers and Arabs to plunder and carry off the inhabitants as slaves. That serious invasion was near at hand all understood, except perhaps Roderich and the idle young Goths who formed his court. As yet, it is true, Don Julian held the enemy at bay in Africa, but, his presence or his support withdrawn, the Moors would pour like a torrent on the land, and, save for a few of the old leaders who had survived the disastrous reign of Witica, and the enervating atmosphere spreading everywhere from the court into all ranks, *who* was there to oppose them?

CHAPTER III.

DON RODERICH'S PERFIDY.

THE Court life shifts from the green Sierras of Cordoba to the old city of Toledo. Again we are in the corn-bearing plains, the outlines of the domes, pinnacles and turrets of the Alcazar before us gay and jocund with the security of two hundred years of Gothic rule. What footsteps have echoed through those courts! What regal presences haunt them! Iberian, Roman, and Gothic; Recaredo, Wamba, Witica, and comely Roderich; to be followed by Moors, and Castilian kings; El Caballero, El Emplazado, El Valente, El Impotente; a red-haired bastard of Trastamare succeeding his brother Don Pedro El Cruel, a swaggering Alfonso, Velasque's, Philip, the staid dowager-Queen Berenguela, fair Isabel the Catholic, the widow of Philip the Fourth, the mother of Charles El Soco, Johana El Loca, not to forget the Cid, first Christian alcaide and governor; a palace in old times marking the utmost limits of the known world, beyond which the east looked into the hyperborean

darkness of the west; the geographical centre of all Spain—supremely regal, its foundations laid in legend, and its ramparts raised in the glamour of Oriental song; a refuge from Moorish invasion for the defenceless Goth, and the superb residence of later kings. In a hollow beneath rise the towers of the cathedral, and the outline of many ancient synagogues, for the Jews were always powerful in Toledo—El Transito and El Blanco are the principal, and hospitals for the chosen race. If Toledo was the Gothic capital, it was also long before known under the name of "*Toledoth*," where the Jews came in great numbers after the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. "*The Jews fled to Tarshish*," says the Bible, and Tarshish is the scriptural name for southern Spain.

Other churches and oratories there were, for the Goths were a pious people, also the house of Wamba over the Tagus, and the mystic tower of Hercules, rising on a rock, the entrance guarded by an inscription setting forth "*that whenever a king passes the threshold, the empire of Spain shall fall;*" a warning much respected by the Gothic kings—Wamba, Ervig, Eric and Witica, who each in turn ordered fresh locks and chains to be added to make it fast. Baths there were also, and on the hills summer houses and *huertas* moistened by fountains and streams, the dark Tagus making, as it were, a defence and barrier about the walls.

One plaisance there was, particularly noted, on a terrace overhanging the river, where the spires and domes of many-painted pavilions uprose, with tile-

paved *patios*, and arcades and *miradores* open to the sky, which Roderich had formed for Egilona, from the pattern of a Moorish retreat she loved at Algiers. Here soft fluffy plane-trees whispered to the breeze, violets blossomed in low damp trenches, and the blue-green fronds of the palms cut against the sky. A garden, indeed, most cunningly adapted to intoxicate the senses, where every tree and branch was vocal with nightingale and thrush, the soft rhythm of zambras and flutes thrilling through the boughs from invisible orchestras; a place in itself so lovely and so lonely that life passed by in an atmosphere of delight, akin to the houri-haunted paradise prepared for the brave Moslems who fall in battle. Hither came Egilona, as into the solitude of an Eastern harem, shut out from the foot of man. Even Roderich rarely entered to disturb her hours of innocent delight, surrounded by a band of fair damsels, who, like Florinda, had been committed to her care.

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It was a delicious evening after a day of fiery heat. So oppressive had been the sun, that even the orange leaves flagged on their stems and the song-birds were mute. In the broad plains without, the rarefied air trembled; nothing but the sharp note of the cicala broke the silence of midday.

Now the air was cool in these leafy gardens, overhanging the river, from which delicate rippling gusts rose up to fan the atmosphere. The dazzling pavilions with open galleries lay in shadow, and only a transient ray from the setting sun lit up some detail of lace-worked panel or gilded pinnacle into a transient flame.

On a broad terrace, from which the roofs of the city were dimmed into vague outlines, a merry party of the queen's maidens emerge from one of the galleries, amid peals of that shrill and joyous laughter heard only among the young, and running swiftly along scare the peacocks, who drop their tails and fly into the covered avenues beyond. Some ensconce themselves in verdant kiosks, others wander into the bamboo-thickets to lie on flowery banks, or wade in the shallow streams which flow around. One delicately-limbed girl, oppressed by the heat, divests herself of the light draperies she wears, and like a playful Nereid plunges into a pool, scattering water on her laughing companions.

One of these maidens, Zora by name, who had come from Barbary with Egilona, is of a darker colouring than the rest. Zora can sing to the cyther and relate stories like a true Arab as she is. Now a circle of her companions gather about her, and beg her to tell them a tale.

"But you have heard all my stories so often," pleads poor Zora, whose little feet are tingling with the desire of movement after the confinement of the long hot day.

"Never mind, you must invent a new one, Zora." A cloud passes over her merry face. "*Invent* a story! Well, I will try," and after a few minutes she seats herself on a porcelain bench under a clump of cedars, and begins.

Zora's Story.

"There were once three sisters, I don't know where, but they were princesses. They had an ugly

old father with one eye, who shut them up in a tower high in a wall. They were never to go out, and had an old slave to watch them; her name was Wenza, and there was a eunuch too, who carried a scimitar; but he does not matter, for he stayed out of doors.

"Now the tower was very beautiful, only the sisters did not like it, because they called it a prison. There was a *patio* with an alabaster fountain, which kept up a running murmur day and night; the walls were wrought in a coloured network of flowers, and arches and angles were worked beautifully to look like crystal caves. All around were the sweetest little rooms for the sisters to sleep in, not forgetting Wenza, who, they said, snored, so she was put in the furthest one. The walls were hung with golden tapestry, and the divans worked with shells and stones. So beautiful! Like a casket! There were curtains with monsters and beasts embroidered in fine silk hung at the doors to keep out draughts, and so many singing-birds in golden cages, that there were times when they could not hear themselves speak. A little kitchen too, lay in a corner, where Wenza cooked the food, but the sisters lived on cakes and fruit quite in a fairy-like way, which often made Wenza say she knew she would be starved, only the eunuch was kind and handed in sometimes on his scimitar a piece of meat. High up in the walls were barred casemates, but oh! so small, mere slits, and the princesses often tore their robes clambering up to look out. They could see the sky—a passing cloud was a variety,

but what delighted them most, and indeed occupied the day, when they were not playing on lutes and cythers, or teaching tricks to the birds, was a rocky valley, oh! so deep down! They could just see it. The sun never shone there, and the rocks looked always damp. A valley, and a stream with a strange echo like voices, only what it said was past their power to know, and Wenza could not help them, she only pulled them down from the windows and scolded them, and threatened she would call in the eunuch with his drawn sword. But Wenza liked to hear about it all the same, and asked often if the voices of the stream had spoken more plainly.

"The only one who minded what Wenza said was the youngest princess, Zeda. She was much more timid than her sisters, with cheeks as white as a lily. She could touch the stops of a silver lute and sing Moorish ballads. She was so gentle; she would nurse a sick bird in her warm hand for hours and hours, and feed the little starlings that settled on the window-edge. All day she was in and out about the flowers, which stood in pots round the fountain and lived on the spray.

"Zoda, the second, was very vain, and looked at herself in a steel mirror twenty times a day, painting her eyes and trimming her hair, and Lindaxara, the eldest, was proud, and would sometimes beat poor gentle Zeda when she offended her."

"And their clothes?" asked a little Gothic maiden interrupting her, "you have told us nothing of their clothes."

"Ah! that is true," and Zora paused and thought

a little. "Well! they were all in tunics of white satin with gemmed waistbands and borders, and trousers of Broussa gauze, lined with rose colour, little caps upon their heads twinkling with coins, and necklaces of pearl. Very lovely clothes, I assure you, and they looked lovely too standing with the spray of the fountain behind them.

"Well," continued Zora, growing eager herself as her tale went on, and the eyes of all her companions riveted on her, "you may fancy what it was, when Lindaxara, who was tall and slim, clambered up one day to the latticed window and saw *three Christian knights*, working among the stones in the valley below. She was so astonished that she gave a loud scream, which brought her sisters and Wenza to the window. So there was no secret about it, and they all strained their necks as far as the bars would let them.

"Just to think of it! Three adorable knights in the flower of youth. Eyes full of love, and the sweetest heads of hair, not cut and trimmed like the Arabs' under big turbans, but hanging loose in curls upon their shoulders. Captives, alas! loaded with chains! The tears came into the sisters' eyes as they gazed. 'The one in green,' cries Lindaxara, thrilling all over as she leant out of the bars, 'he is my knight. What grace! What beauty!'

"'No, the crimson one for me,' says Zoda, arranging her hair. 'I love him already. He shall never be a slave.'

"Gentle little Zeda said nothing, but heaved a

great sigh. 'No one will ever care for me, she whispers, 'but it is that other one I like best. He has such a heavenly smile.'

"After which, Wenza, suddenly remembering her duty, drove them all down, and shut up the window. But too late, the harm was done, Wenza protested, but she was the worst of all. The eunuch was bribed by her with so much gold, he put up his scimitar, and did all that he was bid.

"The Christian knights were told that three beautiful princesses, daughters of the one-eyed king, loved them. It made them very happy in spite of their chains. They managed to talk together by signs and to arrange their plans.

"One night, when the moon was sinking, and all was still, a whistle, heard from below, strikes on impatient ears. The bars had been sawn from the window by the eunuch, who was strong, and Wenza had cut the sheets into strips and tied them all together into a long rope; then one by one they went down, at first trembling, but quite brave and glad at last, as they fell into the arms of the Christian knights, Wenza into the arms of the eunuch, who took care of her—all save poor little Zeda.

"When it came to her turn to descend, she had no courage to move, but stood at the window clasping her hands, and casting down wistful glances on her sisters. Now her fingers are on the cord, then she withdraws them; she sees her Christian knight beckoning to her; listens, listens as the stream calls Zeda. Again she grasps the cord. In vain, her heart failed her.

"'Too late, too late, dear sisters,' she cries. 'Go

forth and be happy. Think sometimes of the poor little prisoner left behind.' And so," concludes Zora, evidently at a loss how to finish her tale, "Ansa, the one-eyed king, her father, coming to visit his daughters, found her alone, and condemned her to die of hunger in the tower.

"Poor little Zeda! But she still lives in the spirit of the fountain, when it boils and bubbles at night, in the form of a Moslem Princess, flower-crowned, singing to a silver lute. 'Ay de mi Zeda!'"

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A great clapping of hands, and many thanks to Zora for the story, greeted its conclusion. The little Gothic maiden, who was very fond of Zora, cried at the fate of the poor princess starved to death. She is sure none of them were comelier than Zora; and in this she speaks truly. An African sun had dyed her skin to a ruddier colour, given symmetry to her limbs, and a dark fire to her eyes. As a stranger Zora is by turns laughed at and petted. And as the setting sun now catches the swarthy ebony of her long hair, and blazes on the rich brown of her cheek, the difference between her and the rest suddenly strikes a lively little playmate, who is forming a pattern on the ground from the coloured petals of roses.

"I should like to know," says she, contemplating Zora, "which is prettiest, dark Zora with the flashing eyes, or pale Florinda with the chestnut curls. In my opinion Zora is worth a whole bevy of us white-faced Goths."

"No, no, no," echoes from all sides, while poor Zora, put to shame, blushes under her tawny

skin and retreats to the farthest corner of the garden.

"I will not give the palm of beauty to Zora," cries another voice, "but to Florinda. Where is she?" A general search is made for a long time in vain, but at last she is discovered fast asleep under a palm. Slumber has lent a lustre to her cheek, and her white bosom rises and falls under the transparent tissue of her bodice.

"Look!" cry the maidens exultingly, "can you compare Zora with Florinda?" And in their eagerness the giddy group tear asunder the sheltering draperies which cling about her.

Alas! little did they know, these joyous maidens, that the fate of the Gothic kingdom turned on the balance of their childish games, and that, mere puppets in the hands of fate, they were destined to be the instruments of destruction to their country!

In the gloom that precedes the setting of the sun, amid the dusky shadows of huge-leaved plants and myrtle hedges which broke the space into squares in every direction, Don Roderich had stolen from the Alcazar to enjoy the evening freshness and to visit the queen. Hearing from afar the bursts of girlish laughter, at the contest of beauty between dark and fair, he looked out from the latticed *miradore* of the pavilion, and beheld the undraped form of Florinda before she can escape from the hands of her companions.

That glance is fatal. Forgetful of the sacred pledges given to her father, forgetful of his honour as a knight and his gratitude as a king, a mighty passion rises within his breast. But Florinda gave

no response; his fervid glances were met with downcast eyes, and a blush rises on her cheek as she involuntarily approaches him. This did but serve to fan his lawless love; and so great is his infatuation he could not persuade himself that she did not return it. His whole soul is as a furnace, which consumes his life. Speak to her he must, and a wicked hope whispers it will not be in vain!

Meeting her one day, a little later, by chance in the queen's antechamber, he called her to him, and presented to her his hand.

"Sweet one," says he, in a voice he could scarcely command, every pulse within him beating tumultuously, "a thorn has sorely pricked me, can you draw it out?"

Florinda, who unconsciously had come rather to fear him, kneels at his feet and takes his hand in hers. At the touch of her light fingers a tremor runs through his frame. Was this slight girl to resist the transports that shake his being to the core, as the fury of the tempest shakes the light leaves?

As she kneels the tresses of her auburn hair fall as a veil around her, and blush after blush flushes her cheeks. Vainly she seeks for the thorn in Don Roderich's hand. In her surprise she lifts her eyes to his, which are bent on her with ill-controlled passion; then, starting to her feet in confusion, "My lord," she says, retreating from where he stands leaning against a painted pillar, his jewelled cap pressed down upon his brows, "there is no thorn."

She turns to go, filled with an apprehension she

cannot explain, but he catches her hand, and presses it to his heart.

"Here, here is the thorn, Florinda; will you pluck *that* out?"

"My lord, my lord," cries the alarmed girl, "I do not catch your meaning."

"Then I will teach you," he answers, fast losing command over himself. "Do you love me?" and he draws her to him so near that his quick-coming breath plays upon her cheek.

Ever farther and farther she strives to retreat; ever nearer and nearer Don Roderich presses her, his glowing eyes resting on her like flames.

"My lord," she says at last, trembling from head to foot, "my father told me to revere you as himself. I was to be to you and to the queen as a daughter. To your protection I look, may it never fail."

A terrible fear possesses her of coming danger, as she shapes her words to this appeal, and had a spark of loyalty remained in the heart of Don Roderich, her reproof would have brought him to a better mind, but an evil destiny had doomed him to work out his own ruin.

"Florinda," he cries, seizing her by both hands so as to draw her to him by force, "innocent as you are, you must understand me. It is not the love for a father nor the submission to a king I ask of you. It is *love*. Ah! tremble not, fair one, there is nothing to scare you. None shall know it. Deep in our hearts it shall lie. Nor does the love of your king degrade you like that of a common man. All the power of the Gothic throne

shall compass you with delights, and I will make your father Julian greater than myself."

At these base words the rising terror of Florinda gave place to indignation. Her soft eyes kindle with a far different fire than that which Don Roderich would have desired.

"I understand, my lord," she answers, in a firm voice; "but none of my race hold power by evil means. My father would rather die than accept such dishonour. But," and an ill-assured smile plays about her mouth, "I believe you mean but to try me; you think me too stupid and childish to serve the queen. I pray your pardon for taking a jest in such foolish earnest."

The blanched face of Florinda ill-corresponded with the words which her quivering lips could scarcely articulate.

"May I die," cries Don Roderich, "if I speak aught but truth. My heart, my kingdom, are at your command. Be mine, fair angel, and the Goths shall know no rule but yours."

But now, the courage of Florinda, timid and girlish as she was, rises up within her. "My lord, I am in your power," are her words. "You may kill me, but there you stop. My will you can never force," then, casting up her arms with a gesture of despair, she fled, vanishing among the long lines of pillars in the hall; and such had been the power of her anger, that the king dared not follow her. And here we must leave her with a wonder whether the assiduous worship paid her by Roderich was *always* repulsed with a like vigour,

or if the opprobrious name of *La Cava* with which she came to be branded in the legends of the time was not undeserved.

That the king was so depraved by the indulgence of his life as not to be haunted by the shame of what he had done is difficult to believe. That he counted, however, on the secrecy of Florinda would seem certain from the indifference he displayed to the consequences of his action as affecting his relations with Julian, at that very time leading his army against the Moorish hosts, commanded by the veteran general, Mousa, in the neighbourhood of Ceuta.

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"Those whom the gods forsake, they blind," says the Pagan proverb. It is certainly impossible to explain the inactivity of the once valiant Roderich by any rational course of reasoning. Not only had the rumour of approaching battle come from the African shore, but swift messengers had brought to Toledo the news that the rock of Calpe (Gibraltar) in Spain bristled with scimitars, led by the ferocious old Berber, Tháryk, with his single eye.

"Tell Roderich the Goth," ran the message, "that Tháryk has crossed the Straits to conquer his kingdom, and that he will not return until he has made the Goth lick the dust before him."

Whatever blindness had fallen on Roderich, the consciousness of her disgrace soon forced itself on the mind of Florinda. Guilty or not, despair at last took possession of her. For a time she was silent, but unable to endure her shame, and horrified at her treason towards the queen, who ever tenderly

cherished her, in a paroxysm of remorseful grief she caught up a pen and wrote to Julian:

"Would to God, my father, that the earth had swallowed me ere I came to Toledo! What am I to tell you of that which it is meet to conceal? Alas! my father, your lamb has been entrusted to the wolf. She were better dead than dishonoured. Hasten to rescue your unhappy Florinda. Come quickly."

Tying this brief missive in a square of silk, and fastening it with a ribbon, she called to her a young page, bred at her father's court, who had been especially appointed to her service.

"Adolfo," said she, and sobs were in her voice, "saddle the swiftest steed you can lay hands on, and if ever, dear *niño*, you aspire to the honours of a belted knight in the service of my father, or hope for lady's grace in the tournay; if ever—" here she burst into a flood of tears, moved by her own vehemence. "Oh, sweet Adolfo, dear little page, reared up in my home, for the love of Christ, ride day and night until you reach the sea. Then, at the price of gold, which I give you," and she places in his hands a heavy purse, "take the best boat and the swiftest rowers, and with flowing sail speed to my father at Ceuta, nor eat or drink until you have placed this writing in his hand."

Before the eager Florinda, whose every feature spoke the deadly anxiety she felt, the page, cap in hand, bows low.

"Trust me, noble daughter of my honoured lord. I will truly execute your trust. Swiftly

will I ride, nor turn aside for aught but death, either by land or sea."

Placing the letter in the bosom of his gaudy vest, he kissed her hand and sped his way; mounted a fast horse he found in the *patio* of the Palace, galloped down the declivity, through the Golden Gate, and so on into the eternal plains which gird about Toledo, until clouds of dust conceal him from Florinda's anxious gaze.

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Meanwhile, Julian, fighting valiantly in Africa, had just repulsed an attack of Mousu on the castle of Ceuta, standing on a cape which juts out into the Straits, the nearest point to the Spanish mainland. It was a desperate struggle; the Moors, under the command of the famous Arab, rallying again and again.

The news of such a success spread round not only in Africa but over all the breadth of Spain. The landing of the Moors in Andalusia was a constant subject of terror on the mainland. Men knew that the Gothic nation no longer held together as under the early kings, and that each chief looked to himself alone, caring but little what became of his neighbours. The castles were dismantled by the selfish policy of Witica and Roderich, and the army was sunk into the same luxurious ease as the rest of the nation.

The name of Julian was soon on every lip. He was hailed as a saviour, and blessings invoked on him as the bulwark of the Cross.

With the sound of this homage ringing in his ears, the page arrives at Ceuta, bearing the letter from

Florinda. Julian at once summons him to his tent, as perchance the bearer of some signal honour bestowed upon him by the king, or of some royal recompense for his services.

"What tidings from Don Roderich?" he asks.

"None, my lord," is the answer. "I rode in haste away, without seeing the king. What I bear is a letter from the Lady Florinda."

"Florinda—how fares she?"

"Well, my lord," answers the page, as he takes the silken packet from his bosom.

Cutting the ribbon that binds it with his dagger, Julian reads the miserable lines; word after word brings a terrible certainty to his mind; he stands in speechless anguish, then, flinging the parchment from him, he folds his arms, while one by one the burning remembrance of each act of devotion to Roderich stings him to the soul. It is a terrible reckoning: a dark and malignant fury enters into his soul, not only against Roderich, but against all Spain, the scene of his dishonour, the home of his disgrace.

"And this," cries he, when words came to his lips, "is my reward for serving a villain! This is the return he makes me for the hostage of my child! May I die a slave if I rest until I have given him full measure in return!"

CHAPTER IV.

DON JULIAN GOES OVER TO THE MOORS.

JULIAN'S first object is, without exciting suspicion, to remove his daughter from Toledo. Full of the project of revenge, he crosses the Straits and repairs to the Court. Wherever he appears he is hailed as the leader to whose prowess the nation owes its safety. Roderich, counting on the silence of Florinda, receives him with a frank and generous welcome, and loads him with new honours. Julian, meanwhile, artfully magnifies the present danger which threatens the frontier, and prepares all things for his return to Africa. For Florinda he obtains leave of absence from the queen "to attend upon her mother Frandina, dangerously ill at Algeciras." Together they cross the bridge of the Tagus, followed by the shouting populace, but as his horse's hoofs strike on the opposite bank he raises his mailed hand, and shakes it in the air as he turns his eyes towards the Alcazar.

"My curse rest on thee, Don Roderich!" are his words. "May desolation fall on thy dwelling and thy realm!"

Journeying on with Florinda, he came to a wild range of mountains near Consucara,—still called the Mountain of Treason—where he meets his kinsman,

Archbishop Opas, and his wife Frandina, a formidable amazon, who not only followed her lord in battle, but concentrated in herself all the duplicity of her brother.

She had long hated Roderich for his marriage with Egilona, now she could revenge herself.

"I would rather die," she exclaims, as she gazed at Florinda, prostrate at her feet, "than submit to this outrage!"

"Be satisfied," replies Don Julian; "she shall be avenged. Opas will bind our friends by dreadful oaths. I myself will go to Africa to seek great Mousa, and negotiate his aid."

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From Malaga Julian embarked for Africa with Frandina and Florinda, his treasure and his household, and ever since the gate in the city wall through which they passed is called *Puerta de la Cava* (Gate of the Harlot), by which name the unhappy Florinda was known among the Moors.

The dark tents of the Moslems are spread in a pastoral valley at the foot of the billowy chain of hills which follow along the north of Barbary (as it was called of old); outshoots from the great Atlas range which towers in the far distance. A motley host from Egypt and Mauritania—Saracens, Tartars, Syrians, Copts and Berbers,—all, Christian or Moslem, fair-skinned or negro, united under the banner of Mousa, Governor of North Africa for the Caliph of Damascus, a man long past middle life, but who conceals his years cunningly.

As Mousa sat to administer justice among the mixed tribes of his host, raised on a divan covered

with sheep-skins, under a wide-spreading oak, near which a rapid streamlet ran down into the sea, the flag of Islam floating beside him, Thâryk, his lieutenant, on his right hand—a bugle sounds from above among the hills, and the gay apparel of a herald appears in the distance, attended by a single trumpeter. Cautiously descending the steep path among a forest-like grove, the herald, bearing on his tabard the Gothic arms, pauses at the base; the trumpeter sounds another loud blast, then both ride boldly into the circle gathered round Mousa. After an obeisance, responded to in silence by the astonished Moors, he speaks, lowering his cognizance before the chief: "I demand," says he, "a safe passage for my master, Don Julian Espatorios of Spain, under King Roderich the Goth. Can he come without danger to life and limb and depart when he lists?"

To which Mousa, touching with the tips of his fingers the folds of the green turban which he wore, then carrying them down and crossing them on his chest, in an Eastern salute of ceremony, replies,—

"The demand of Don Julian is granted. Let my noble adversary advance without fear. So brave a leader shall eat of our salt were he ten times our foe."

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Clad in a complete suit of armour, and mounted on a powerful charger, Julian appears. A surcoat of black is over his armour, his legs are encased in fluted steel, and on his helmet rests a sable plume. Behind him rides his esquire, bearing his lance and shield. With grave courtesy

he salutes the Moslem chiefs whom he has so lately defeated, then, upon the motion of Mousa, who rises at his approach, dismounts, and, flinging the bridle to his esquire, takes the place assigned to him.

The deep-set eyes of Julian, for he wears his vizor raised, are fixed on the face of Mousa, who, with the refinement of Eastern courtesy, affects to smile, although much exercised in his mind as to what motive can have induced his adversary thus voluntarily to place himself in his power. His lieutenant Thâryk, a rough warrior, gifted with little command over his countenance, glares at him meanwhile out of his single eye with unconcealed hatred.

An awkward pause follows, broken only by the low ripple of the brook, carolling swiftly over the glancing pebbles, which separates Julian from Mousa, thus as it were symbolizing the position of the late combatants by its slender barrier. At last Julian speaks: "Hitherto, O Emir of the Faithful, we have met as enemies. Now I am come to offer you my country and my king. Country," he repeats bitterly, as a dark frown overshadows his face, pale under his helmet, "I have none; Roderich the Goth is my deadliest enemy. He has blasted the honour of my name. Aid me, O Mousa, to revenge, and all Spain is in your hand."

Not even the grave immobility of countenance in which the Moslem is trained to conceal his emotions could altogether prevent the movement of amazement with which this speech was received by Mousa and Thâryk and those around. What motive, however, was powerful enough to cause Julian thus to present

himself in the face of the assembled chiefs of Islam mattered not to Mousa. Julian had spoken, and his heart leapt within him at the words. How often had he gazed on the low hills along the Spanish coast washed by the Straits! How often had he longed to possess himself of the fair plains lying beyond; a land rich with rivers and pastures, vines, olives and pomegranates, splendid cities and castles, flowing with milk and honey—and now it was his own! But, wary by nature, and cautious by age, the henna-stained warrior (for it was said of Mousa that, to retain his youthful appearance, he dyed his hair and beard) pauses ere he replies, and turns towards the sheikhs who sat around,—

"Don Julian," says he, affecting to knit his bushy eyebrows, "comes here as a traitor. The same treason may be hidden in his word that he shows to his own master. But lately he held the garrisons of the Goths against us in the stronghold of Ceuta, and prevailed. The faithful were driven out, and the Arab camp broken. How can we credit him? The Koran teaches that those who deceive an enemy are blessed."

"Ceuta!" shouts Julian, "yes, O Mousa, you have said well. It is true I drove your Moslems from the field like sheep before the wolves. Yes!" (and even as he speaks his voice grows loud and fierce) "on every side I was hailed as a deliverer, and my heart swelled within me as I thought upon the victory I had won. Then, in the moment when the shouts of the Goths were echoing in my ears, and Roderich made of me almost a king, a letter

came to my hand." Here all expression died out of his face, his powerful frame seemed to stiffen into stone, but from out of the upraised bars of his helmet a menacing fire shone in his eyes, which belied the seeming calm of his demeanour. His gaze is fixed on Mousa, not as though he perceived him, but rather as if the eyes of his mind are ranging far away among the scenes which had brought him to this pass.

"Explain, noble Goth," replies Mousa, "else is your coming vain."

Recalled to himself by the Emir's voice, Julian proceeds; but he visibly faltered as the words came slowly to his lips. "The dishonour of my house is my reward. My name is blasted while Roderich lives. For this purpose am I come."

"This is a wild tale," answers Mousa, crossing his arms within the draperies of his robe. "Your own words proclaim you a traitor. You may be true. If false, Allah judge you!"

Then it was that Tháryk-el-Tuerto rose and stood forth from among the sheikhs, his one eye gleaming with a savage joy.

"Doubt not the words of Don Julian, O Emir," he cries. "The wrong which Roderich has wrought him would move the lowest Berber of the desert to revenge. By his offer, O Emir, a new land spreads out before us, inviting us to conquest. What is to prevent us from becoming the inheritors of the Goth? Let me go forth with Don Julian and prove the land."

The bold words of "the one-eyed Tháryk" find favour with Mousa and the chiefs. "Allah is

great," is their answer. "Mahomet the Prophet speaks by the mouth of Tháryk. Let it be as he desires."

So Julian and Tháryk departed with five galleys and five hundred men; landed at Algeciras in the Bay of Gibraltar (Gibel Taric to this day, in memory of him), and returned to Africa with such tidings of the power of Julian to raise the land, that a formidable invasion is decided on.

CHAPTER V.

LANDING OF THE MOORS—THE EVE OF BATTLE.

DON RODERICH, seated with the beauteous Queen Egilona in the royal castle of Toledo, eagerly questions a herald sent forward by Teodomir from Murcia.

"What tidings from the south?" he asks.

"Of great woe," is the answer. "Already the rock of Calpe has fallen. The noble Teodomir is wounded. The Gothic troops, O King! fly before the Moslem. Whether they come from heaven or hell we know not. They have no ships, yet they overrun the coast. Send us aid with speed."

At this dismal news Roderich turned to the wall and covered his face with his robe. Changed as he was from the valorous young hero of earlier days, enervated and sensual, the blood of brave warriors flowed in his veins, and shame and remorse overwhelmed him. Not one word could Egilona draw from him. To the pressure of her soft arms he did not respond; nor did he heed the kisses she showered on him, as, parting the long meshes of his flowing locks, she strove to uncover his face.

Around, the courtiers stand mute, each man with his eyes fixed on the earth. An awful silence

follows, broken only by the sobs of the queen, as messenger after messenger rides in, distracting the city with fresh tales of woe. So easy had the treachery of Julian made conquest to the Moors, that already the coast of Andalusia bristled with scimitars, and bands of turbaned horsemen had overrun the plains to the banks of the Guadalete.

What were Roderich's thoughts as he sat motionless? Did he recall the prophecy of his fall, when, contrary to the advice of the archbishop, who implored him to respect a mystery held sacred for generations, he had forced his way into the magic Tower of Hercules, planted on the cliffs outside Toledo, and in spite of all warnings broke the lock of the enchanted casket, and unfolded the linen cloths on which were painted miniature figures of horsemen wearing turbans and Eastern tunics, scimitars at their side and crossbows at their saddle-bows, carrying pennons and banners with crescents and Moorish devices—all of which at first appeared small, as a pattern to be folded up, then grew and expanded into the size of life—squadrons of Moorish warriors filling the space, as they moved upwards out of the cloth, in ever-lengthening lines, to the faint sound of distant warlike instruments; becoming ever larger and louder as the enchantment grew, and the figures waxing greater to the far-off clash of cymbals and trumpets, the neighing of war-steeds snorting in the charge, and shouts as of the approach of serried hosts.

And, as Don Roderich gazed as one stupefied before the vision he had audaciously invoked, plainer and plainer became the motion of the

figures, and wilder the din, as the linen cloth rolled itself higher and higher and spread and amplified out of the casket, until it rose into the dome of the hall, its texture no longer visible, but moving with the air, the shadowy figures plainer and yet plainer in their fierce warfare, and the din and uproar more appalling as they formed into the semblance of a great battle-field where Christians and Moors strove with each other in deadly conflict; the rush and tramp of horses ever clearer, the blast of trumpet and clarion shriller and louder, the clash of swords and maces, the thud of battle-axes striking together, the whistle of ghostly arrows through the air, and the hurling of lances and darts—while phantom drums rumbled as by thousands with the under-note of war; two battling hosts clearly discerned, presenting all the phases of a desperate combat. And now, behold the phantom lines of the Christians quail before the infidel, pressing on them in shadowy thousands, the standard of the Cross is felled, the Gothic banner fouled, the air resounds with shouts, yells of fury, and groans of dying men; and plain among the flying hosts is seen a mounted form, bearing the semblance of a shadowy king—a golden crown encircles his helmet—mounted on a white steed with blood-stained haunches, the satin-coated Orelia gallantly bearing him out of the battle. No countenance is visible, for his back is turned, but in the fashion of the inlaid armour, the jewelled circlet, the device, and graceful lines of his favourite war-horse, Don Roderich, with eyes dilated with horror, beholds himself flying across the plains! Unseated in the

mêlée he disappears; and Orelia, without a rider, careers wildly on, as though in search of the loved master, the touch of whose hand she knows so well!

Roderich, paralyzed with horror, saw no more, but rushing from the magic hall, the rumble of phantom drums and trumpets in his ear, commands that the iron doors of the Tower of Hercules be for ever closed.

Such was the warning, but he heeded not.

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On July 26th, 711, beside the river Guadalete (Wady Lete), near Xerez, was fought out the fate of Spain. A dull, dreary region, over which the eye now wanders objectless, save for a far-off lying tower, or a solitary pine marked against the horizon; the scent of lavender and rosemary strong in the wind, like incense rising up for the forgotten dead, whose bones whitened the plain.

The Moors, under the command of Tháryk, "the one-eyed," were inferior in numbers to the Goths, but compacter and more dexterous, accustomed to constant warfare, and headed by experienced leaders. As the rays of the setting sun caught the wide circle of the Moslem camp the evening before the battle, a motley crowd of many tribes met the astonished eyes of the Goths; Berbers from North Africa in white turbans and wide flying burnous, armed with lance and wattled shields; roving Bedouins on the fleetest steeds, their glossy coats hung with beads and charms; Ethiopians, black as night; Nubians with matted hair, and men from Barbary and Tunis.

On landing at Tarifa, near the rock of Gibraltar, Tháryk had burnt every ship. "Behold,"

said he, pointing to the flames which ran swiftly along the wood of the light African *triremes;* "there is now no escape for cowards. We conquer, or we die. Your home is before you," and he pointed to the low line of inland hills which bound the horizon. As he spoke, an ancient woman, covered with a woollen sheet gathered about her naked limbs, drew near to where he was standing surrounded by his sheikhs, waving a white rag.

"Great Emir," quoth she, falling on the earth to kiss his feet in Eastern fashion, "I am the bearer of a prophecy written by an ancient seer. He foretold that the Moors would over-run our country, if a leader should appear known by these signs: On his right shoulder is a mole, and his right arm is longer than his left, so that he can cover his knee with one hand without bending down."

Thâryk listens with grave attention, then lays bare his arm. There was the mole, and so much did his right arm exceed the left in length, that he could clasp his knee with his hand.

The Christians had pitched their tents at sunset, somewhat distant from the Moors, whose black banners, with mysterious signs, dark tents and savage weapons inspired them with awe. Before night, Don Roderich sent out a picked squadron of the Gothic body-guard to skirmish with the enemy, with flags and standards bearing the same device as those which had floated before Alaric at the walls of Rome. Each chief, encased in ponderous armour, in singular contrast to the light-

armed Moors—attended by esquires heavily armed also, and bowmen and men-at-arms. Old Teodomir led them, come from his government of Murcia, with many another tried Gothic chief; Ataulfo, and the grey-headed Pelistes, heading, with the traditions of the earliest times, his vassals and retainers. With him was his young son, who had never borne arms but in the lists of the tourney. The young Pelayo had craved to be present, to flesh his maiden sword against the enemy, but the jealousy of Roderich, who hated all those of the old race, had forbidden it; an affront that so rankled in his soul that he swore what seemed then a foolish oath, but which time ratified—to lead his countrymen or to die.

To this goodly array of Christian knights the Moors were not slow to correspond. Ranks of fleet horsemen rode out in the failing light, under the command of Julian (ever to the fore where the fighting was hottest), sacrificing many a gallant life in empty skirmishing, all by the advice of the Archbishop Opas, whose tent lay near to Roderich, while he secretly guided the Moors.

Old Tháryk, astonished by this prompt display of the valour of the Goths, and their devotion to their king, sought out Julian, sternly remonstrating,—

"You told me your countrymen were sunk in sloth and effeminacy under a dastard king. But behold, I see their tents whitening the plains and his army to be reckoned by thousands upon thousands of good fighting men. Woe unto you, O Christian knight, if, to work out your own

vengeance, you have lured me with false words."

Julian, greatly troubled, retired to his tent, and called to him his page, the same who had brought him the letter of Florinda from Toledo.

"My pretty boy," he said, passing his arm about his neck, "you know that I love you almost as a son. Now is the time to serve me. Hie to the Christian camp, and find the tent of my kinsman, Archbishop Opas. Show him this ring, and tell him Julian greets him and demands how Florinda can be avenged. Mark well his answer. Repeat it word by word. Carry close lips and open eyes in the enemy's camp. If challenged, say you are one of the household of the archbishop, bearing missives from Cordoba. So speed you well, my boy. Away, away, away."

Along the margin of the Guadalete he rode, the soft turf giving back no sound. A sword girded to his saddle-bow, a dagger in his belt, mounted on a steed as fleet as air, and black in colour as the night.

Brightly gleamed the Christian fires around their camp, but sadly to his ear came the plaints of the soldiers wounded in the skirmish, who had crawled to the river bank to slake their thirst. Then with a groan, a dying Moor, doomed to expire alone under an alien sky, called on him to stay, and his trusty horse stumbled, and nearly fell, over the prostrate body of a dead knight lately prancing proudly under the sun. The heart of the page faltered. Fain would he have stayed, for he had served in courts, and was of a gentle nature, but never for a moment did

he tarry on his course, or let compassion tempt him to help such as called on him for aid. His master's word was law, and he had said "Haste thee on thy way for life and death."

Challenged by the Christian sentinels, he spoke the words Julian had taught him, and passed through to the tent of the archbishop.

Opas, as one of those militant churchmen so common in that age, having doffed his suit of mail, was resting after the fight. When his own brother had fallen, without remorse he turned to Roderich. Now Roderich in his turn was betrayed and he bethought himself of his kinsfolk.

A stern, high-featured man, with a ready smile, like winter sunshine upon snow. Merciless and hypocritical he had steered his way through two stormy reigns, and was now believed by Roderich to be as devoted to his cause as he had seemed to be to the unhappy Witica. When he saw the ring his brother-in-law had sent him, he made no reply. For awhile he contemplated the page curiously, slowly passing his jewelled fingers over his clean-shaven chin, lost in thought; then he broke silence,—

"Doubtless," said the hypocrite, "the message is from God. Your master Julian is but the mouthpiece of the Most High. Since the divine voice has spoken, and given us time to consider its judgment, it behoves me, his servant in all things, to accomplish his will. Hasten back to your lord, good page, and tell him to have faith in his wife's brother. As yet my own troops have not unsheathed the sword, but are fresh and ready. At the hour of noon to-

morrow, when both armies are engaged, let him look out; I will pass over to the Moslem."

With this treacherous message the page departed, making no noise, and as he guides his black horse along the lines of the river as he had come, the sound of an arrow whistled by his ear, a random shot which did not harm him.

CHAPTER VI.

BATTLE OF GUADALETE—OVERTHROW OF DON RODERICH.

ALL night a light burned in the tent of Don Roderich. If he slept, his slumbers were troubled. Now the pale form of Florinda rose before him with sad eyes, then the hideous vision of the necromantic Tower of Hercules haunts him. He starts up, and, opening the purple hangings of his tent, gazes out at the starry splendour of the southern night.

Before him lay the grassy flats about Xerez, dimly lit by the dark glow of the signal fires marking the verge of the opposite camps. A pale crescent moon hanging over the Moslem tents brought out the lines of low hills far back on the horizon. Not a sound was heard but the tramp of the sentinels, or the neigh of a war-horse, ill-stabled on the turf. The distant click of a horse's hoofs roused him to attention, and he distinctly saw the shadowy outline of a single horseman hurrying along the river's verge, the bearer of the message big with his doom.

From his belt he drew an arrow and sped it

swiftly from a golden bow, watching its silent course, but the dark figure still rode on.

Heavy was his heart within him as he watched the dawn of day (say the old chroniclers), not for himself, but for the thousands who lay stretched in slumber around, and the thought of the lonely Egilona called from him a sigh. Of all things to a brave heart treachery is the sorest woe, and treachery he knew was at work with Julian close at hand. He would have challenged him to single battle, as knight to knight, but for the memory of his crime. This made him shrink before the father whose just vengeance had brought the invaders into the land.

With the glorious burst of morning all these dismal thoughts vanished. Again he became the brilliant chief who had wrested from Witica the crown of Spain. Again his heart swelled with the ardour of battle, as he prepared to lead his army with the pomp proper to a Gothic king.

A comelier monarch never drew breath than Roderich as—attired in a robe of beaten gold, sandals embroidered in pearls and diamonds on his feet, a sceptre in his hand, and a gold crown on his head resplendent with priceless gems—he mounted the lofty chariot of ivory, drawn by milk-white horses champing bits of gold, the wheels and pole covered with plates of gold, and a crimson canopy overhead. As he advanced in front of the army shouts of delight rent the air.

"Forward, brave Goths," he cried, waving his glittering sceptre, as he halted in the front of the royal standard. "God is above to bless the

Christian cause! Your king leads you! Forward to the fight, and death be his portion who shows any fear!"

Ere his voice had ceased, the sun, which had risen brilliantly, sank behind a bank of vapour, and a rising sirocco raised such clouds of dust that the very air was darkened.

Various was the fortune of the day. To the battalions of light Arab horsemen, throwing showers of arrows, stones, and javelins, the old Gothic valour opposed lines of steady troops. Where the Moslem fell, the Christian rushed in, seizing both horse and armour. Desperately they fought and well, until the plain was strewn with prostrate Moors.

Don Roderich, throwing off the cumbrous robes of state, and mounting his satin-coated steed, Orelia, a horned helmet on his head, sternly grasping his buckler, was foremost wherever danger menaced. With the reins loose upon Orelia's neck (who utters a wild snort rushing forward at full speed to meet the charge) the Moors fly before him, as though he were a second Santiago descended from the skies.

Thâryk the one-eyed, maddened at seeing his battalions retreating, flung himself before them, and, rising in his stirrups, strove to stem the tide.

"Oh, Mussulmen," he shouted, "whither would you fly? The sea is behind you, the enemy in front. You have no hope but in valour. Follow me; aim at the leaders. Pick off the Christian knights. He who brings in the head of the Goth shall swim in gold." And putting spurs to his charger, he laid about him to right and left, trampling down the foot soldiers, followed by Tenedos, a Spanish rene-

gade, and a whole company of savage Berbers, who fell upon Ataulfo and the men he led.

A hand-to-hand conflict ensued. Ataulfo was wounded while he struggled with Tenedos, whom he had felled to the earth with his battle-axe, but his good horse being disabled and useless, obliged him to dismount. He tried to seize the reins of that of Tenedos, but the sagacious animal, as if recognizing the hand which had smitten his master, reared and plunged, and would not let him mount. On foot he repulsed a whole circle of assailants. Blow after blow he dealt upon the enemy, keeping back the fierce crew of turbaned Berbers that sought to strike him down.

"All honour to Christian chivalry," cried Thâryk, who, seeing the quick gleam of swords and scimitars around the Gothic prince, spurred to the spot. But a selfish thought came to crush the generous impulse which had moved him for a moment.

"If Ataulfo falls, it will be death to the army of Roderich," whereupon he dealt him such a cruel blow with his scimitar as felled him to the earth. A pool of blood formed round him. Then the Moor, for an instant separated from him by a squadron of horse, led by Pelistes, hastens to deal him the death-blow.

No Goth possessed the moral influence of Pelistes. He was the high priest of chivalry. With him rode his only son. In vain he warned him not to expose himself. In vain! The die was cast—he fell! His maiden battle was doomed to be his last! Alas! poor father! Borne on the shields of his vassals, they carry the boy towards the

royal tent, where Roderich was leading his Gothic guards forward to terminate the battle by a victorious onslaught.

At this moment, when the sun, long obscured by clouds, reached the meridian, and shone forth in sudden lustre, a deafening shout is heard, and Archbishop Opas, in a complete suit of armour, strikes out from the centre of the Christian army at a gallop to join the Moors.

From that moment the fortune of battle changes. In vain did Pelistes, forgetting his grief, lead on such as would follow him. For the first time his voice fell on deaf ears. In vain Teodomir endeavours to rally his veterans. In vain Roderich, on his war-horse, grasps sword and buckler, to reform his flying troops. Surrounded and assailed by his own treacherous subjects, his sword flew like lightning round his horned casque, each stroke felling an enemy. Around him the fight thickens. "A kingdom for his head," cries the voice of Julian, pressing closer and closer with his perjured band.

A mortal panic falls on the Christians. Not only do they not fight, but they throw away their arms and fly!

For three whole days the Bedouins and Berbers, the fleetest riders among the Africans, pursue the flying Goths over the plains. But few of that vast host live to tell the tale. Alone, with a compact body of men, Teodomir managed to escape into the East, and Pelistes, carrying the body of his son, shuts himself up behind the walls of Cordoba.

And Roderich?

The Christian chronicler who furnishes these

details records that the king fell by the sword of Julian, but this is too much of a monkish morality to be true. It is said that Orelia, stained with blood and disabled, was found entangled in a marsh on the borders of the Guadalete, the sandals and mantle of her master beside her.

But where history is silent romancers take up the tale, in those same ballads, parodied by Cervantes, in the inimitable scene of the puppets, in the second part of Don Quixote, when Master Peter, representing Roderich's tragic death, grows alarmed at the Don's frantic wrath, and his drawn sword, and cries, "Hold! hold! These are no real Berbers and Moors, but harmless dolls of pasteboard, picturing unhappy King Roderich, who said, 'Yesterday I was lord of Spain, and to-day I have not a foot of land which I can call my own. Not half an hour ago I had knights and empire at my command, horses in abundance, and chests and bags of gold, but now you see me a ruined and undone man!'"

Roderich, say the ballads, did not perish in the battle of the Guadalete, but seeing that the day was lost, he fled. But not far, for the sleek-skinned Orelia, bleeding with wounds to death, soon fell. Then the king wandered on on foot, faint and sick, his sword hacked into a saw, his jewelled mail drilled through. On the top of the highest rock (that is not much, for we are in the eternal plains) he sits down and weeps. Wherever he turns the sight of death meets his gaze. His valiant Goths have fallen or have fled. No refuge is left in the walled cities, or by the seashore. Toledo, his capital, is far away, and who knows if his banner

still floats from the Alcazar towers? Below is the battle-field stained with Christian blood. There his royal banner trails in the dust. The bodies of his dying troops cover the plain. The shrill cry of the Arab comes sharply to his ear. He can discern the form of Julian, sword in hand, dealing destruction to such as still linger, and Thâryk, on his Arab courser, white-turbaned, more terrible than the phantoms of the black kings who haunt the desert!

Just, however, as Roderich, in despair, is about to kill himself (so the ballad says) a shepherd appears, who gives him food, and conducts him to a neighbouring hermit. The hermit, on learning who he is, regards him somewhat dubiously, exhorts him to pray, and purify himself from sin. As to hospitality he can only offer him an open grave, into which Roderich descends without a murmur, in company with a big black snake. If his repentance be sincere, the hermit tells him, the snake will leave him harmless; if not, it will bite him until he dies.

In the grave the king lies silent for three days. Then the hermit appears, and asks: "How fares it, most noble king? How do you relish your dark bed and dismal bedfellow?"

"The snake," answers Roderich, "is black, and rears its crest, but it does not bite me. Pray for me, good father, that I may be unharmed."

But that very afternoon, sore and doleful moans smite the hermit's ear. It is Roderich from the grave, crying, "Father, father, the snake gnaws me. Now, now I feel his pointed teeth. Oh God, will it soon end?"

At which the hermit, gazing down, exhorts him to

bear the pain "to save his sinful soul," in the true style of monkish consolation.

And thus poor Roderich dies a miserable death, verifying what Sancho Panza says to the duchess, "that all the silks and riches of the Goths did not prevent his being cut off," and the traitor and renegade, Julian, helps the Moors to possess Xerez, and the plain from Seville to the rock of Gibraltar, called *Gebel Tháryk* (hill of Tháryk), which they kept for many centuries, until driven out by Alonso, the wise King of Leon and Castile.

CHAPTER VII.

CORDOBA—PELISTES—DON JULIAN—FLORINDA.

AGAIN we are at Cordoba! Under the protection of its river-girt walls the flying Goths draw breath. From Cordoba the king had started his great army, spreading like waves over the Andalusian plains. To Cordoba, Pelistes and a few terrified fugitives return, bringing tidings of the catastrophe.

The men of Cordoba crowd round them with terror in their looks. Pelistes shakes his aged head, tears gather in his eyes.

"Roderich is fallen," they cry. Your silence reveals it. Be to us a king, O Pelistes, and defend us from the Moors."

He listens in silence. He neither refuses the offer, nor gives consent. His heart is dead within him. Then he lifts his eyes to the green mountains of the Sierra Morena, which give so pleasant an aspect to the great Plaza where he stands, and the long-suppressed tears well over and run down his furrowed cheeks, at the thought that these fair lands and the white city, so jocund in the sun, with avenues of spreading palms, and plane trees, and jasmine-planted gardens, shall fall.

"Citizens," he says, turning to the hundreds whose eager eyes are fixed on him as shipwrecked mariners note the advance of a raft in a stormy sea, "I swear to stand by you to the end. I will undertake the defence of your city."

A solemn oath is registered there on the Plaza (still planted with palms and called now "*del Gran Capitan*," in memory of another great leader, Gonzalo de Cordoba), a solemn oath, and as a sign of accepting all held up their right hands.

But, shameful to relate, so soon as the scouts bring word of the advance of the victorious Moors, every wealthy burgher within Cordoba packs up his goods and flies to the deepest recesses of the Sierra. The monks abandon their convents, the women follow, and only the poor and destitute are left to the mercy of the invaders.

To the sound of drums and cymbals the Moors march in. In front rides the Christian renegade, Maguel, his turbaned head decorated with the crescent of command, his war-horse carrying strings of Christian heads, dropping blood upon the stones. Next is Julian, a dark scowl upon his face, as of a man carrying a load of care. How well he knows each tree and *huerta* and tower along the march—the little creek in the Guadalquivir, where the boats are moored; a lone castle of defence, looking towards the hills (now called "of Almodar"), he often has defended against the wild forays of the Arabs; the Sierra broken into cliffs and precipices, with groves and gardens, and silvery streams, studded by *quintas* and hamlets. There, in a green retreat among the wooded hills, he and

Frandina had lived when Florinda was a child. Here, in the Alcazar, he had met Don Roderich; and the remembrance fills him with such sudden rage, he digs his spurs into the smooth flanks of his Arab charger, an uncalled-for violence which the fiery animal resenting, rears, and half unseats him.

Yes, it was at Cordoba that he consigned Florinda to his care, the fair-faced profligate. There he parted from her, guileless as a babe, and now, through the length and breadth of Spain, she is known by the name of "La Cava." He himself is but a vile renegade. Already the poison of jealousy is working at his heart. The Moors distrust him, though they owe all to him. Where would the one-eyed have been but for him? And Mousa, and Maguel, and the rest? And such an uncontrollable burst of wrath passes over him, that he curses aloud. At least *he* was the first in the court of Roderich, and now, who knows, when Andalusia is conquered and the Moors need him no more, what form their suspicion may assume?

Then came to his mind uneasy thoughts of Frandina and of his son. For himself he cares not. A dagger thrust can settle all his fate—but the boy! his only son! Is he safe under his mother's care? May he not be made a hostage by Tháryk?

Already the scent of treason is in the air!

Here a wild clamour breaks in upon his thoughts. The white walls of Cordoba are in front, and a mighty shout of "Allah! there is no God but Allah, and Mahomet is his Prophet," rises from a thousand

throats of swarthy Aricans, careering wildly over the grass, Numidians, with fringed bands and armlets on elbow and ankle, sun-dried sheikhs and wandering Kalenders and Fakirs in the front of the great army, mounted on camels and mules.

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For three long months Pelistes, well-named the "Father of the Goths," defended the battered Convent of St. George, within which he barricaded himself. Hope of succour supports his courage. Teodomir may come, or young Pelayo, from Asturia or Leon.

But day follows day, and night passes on to night, under the lustre of the southern stars, and no help comes. Eager eyes hail every cloud of dust that sweeps the plain, and interpret dark shadows of the clouds which summer tempests cast, into troops of Christian knights approaching. Alas! no human form is visible, save now and then an Arab horseman, riding with light rein, charged with some mission from Mousa in the south.

Famine, too, comes to try them with its ghastly face. One by one they kill the horses, which had carried them so gallantly from the Guadalete (to a trooper an act as repulsive as the murdering of his child), and strive with divers ills which hunger brings.

Pelistes, unable to bear the sight of the sufferings of his friends, assembles what remains of the miserable garrison, and thus speaks his mind,—

"Comrades," he cries, in a voice which he endeavours to make cheerful, "it is needless to conceal danger from brave men; our case is

desperate. One by one we shall die and leave no sign. There is but one chance, and I shall brave it. To-morrow, before break of day, I will ride forth disguised as one of these base renegades of whom there are so many in Cordoba, and, God willing, spur on to Toledo. If my errand prosper, I will be back in twenty days. If not, at least I shall return to die with you. Keep a sharp look out! Five beacon fires blazing on the lowest line of hills mean success. If not, the blackness of despair engulphs me."

And so it was. As the faint streaks of light tipped the craggy tops of the Sierra with points of gold, warning the shepherds to rise and tend their sheep, and the birds flew low, waiting for further light to wing their course into the upper regions of the air, Pelistes rode forth, a turban on his head, along the silent streets of Cordoba, to which the shadows of long lines of wall give such an Eastern aspect. He passes the gate, but lazily guarded at that early hour, unchallenged, in company with droves of cattle and mules laden with sacks. Then, pricking the sides of his willing horse, he gallops at full speed along the tracks which mount upwards, and, ere the sun rose, had gained the lower spurs of the Sierra.

At the gateway of a *quinta* he draws rein, willing to rest his panting steed. But alas! while he tarries the sound of horses' hoofs, riding at topmost speed over the rocky path he had just traversed, smites his ear. In an instant he is again in the saddle, and straining upwards to conceal himself in a rugged hollow beside the dried-up course of a mountain torrent.

His tired horse, wind-blown and trembling, falters at the edge and falls, rolling with Pelistes to the bottom. Greatly shaken and bleeding, Pelistes extricates himself with difficulty and strives to raise his horse, but when the generous beast, rising with a groan to his master's call, stands up, it falls again on the hard stones unable to keep its feet.

Meanwhile, on comes the horseman through the falling stones and a face he knows too well looks over the brink of the ravine, and a voice calls out, "Well met, brave Pelistes, even in a hole. You have ridden bravely from Cordoba, and are well mounted. We followed you ill, but here we are in time."

The voice is that of Maguel. For all reply, Pelistes, standing by his horse, draws his sword.

"Do you bandy words with me as a coward!" he thunders, brandishing his weapon. "Stand forth! If you are a man, tie your horse to a tree and come down on foot. We will see who is the better man, a Christian renegade or a Gothic knight."

And fight they did, and desperately, as if each held a nation's ransom at his sword's point. Better matched warriors never clashed steel. Fragments of shields flew around; then casques were split, and blood flowed freely. Still they fought. At length Pelistes, who had been much injured by his fall, begins to show signs of weakness, which Maguel perceiving, presses on him the more, until Pelistes, summoning all his remaining strength to strike a final blow, fails in his aim and falls prostrate on the earth.

"This is a brave foe," quoth Maguel to his followers, who, renegade though he was, we must

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allow had generous qualities or he would have run Pelistes through. "Let us save his life, such a knight will honour our triumph." So, unlacing his buckler, they throw water on his face, and raise him upright against a barrier of rock.

Though plunged in a deep swoon, Pelistes lives, and strapped to a stout palfrey reaches Cordoba.

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When the imprisoned captives, straining their eyes for any sign, see him surrounded by dusky Africans, to their eyes a bleeding corpse, their very souls seem dead within them. Pelistes gone, no help can come. To sell their lives dear, they sally forth, but are soon driven back into the convent, each noble Goth dying sword in hand. The convent is immediately occupied by the Moors, and from that time is known as "St. George of the Captives."

Meanwhile, Pelistes found friends among his foes. Slowly his wounds healed, and until he was restored to health the Arabs carefully tended him. At length, when he was able to walk, Maguel (who frankly gloried in his apostacy) bid him to a banquet within the Alcazar. It was a sore trial to the feelings of the old warrior, but they were generous foes. As a prisoner, he could not refuse the hospitality of his hosts, but the woes of his country lay heavy at his heart. The grass was still green over the graves of his comrades, and to his fancy the weapons of the Moors were crimsoned with their blood.

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Pelistes occupied the seat of honour on the right hand of Maguel, and with that exquisite courtesy, for which the Moors were famous, his host turned

the talk on the valour displayed by the Christians, and extolled their gallant defence of Cordoba, specially remembering that devoted little band who had perished in the convent.

"Could I have saved their lives," added Maguel, "it would have done me honour. Such enemies ennoble victory. Had those brave knights consented to surrender when I sent in a flag of truce I should have cherished them as brothers."

Pelistes silently acknowledged the enlightened chivalry of these words, but his heart smote him so sorely that he could not speak for some moments. But for his final charge to them "*not to surrender*" they might be with him now! At length words came to him.

"Happy are the dead," was his reply, in a voice that vibrated with emotion. "They rest in peace after the hard-fought struggle. My companions in arms have fallen with honour, while I live to see fair Spain the prey of strangers. My son is dead, cut down by my side in battle. My friends are gone, I have reason to weep for them. But one there is"—and he raised his voice and a dark fire came into his pale eye—"one for whom I shall never cease to mourn; of all my brothers in arms he was the dearest. Of all the Gothic knights he was the bravest. Alas! where is he? I know not. There is no record of his death in battle, or I would seek for him in the waters of the Guadalete, or on the plains of Xerez; or if, like so many others, he is doomed to slavery in a foreign land, I would join him in exile, and we would mourn our country's loss together."

So pathetic was the tone of Pelistes, so thrilling, that Maguel and the Emirs who sat round asked anxiously, "Who is he?"

"His name," answered Pelistes, with lowered voice, glancing round the table as he spoke, "was Don Julian, Conde Espatorios of Spain."

"How," cried Maguel, "my honoured guest, are you smitten with sudden blindness? Behold your friend. Do you not see him? He is seated there," pointing to Julian, at some distance down the board, attired in the turban and long embroidered caftan of a Moor.

Pelistes paused, slowly raised his eyes, then sternly fixed them on Julian. "In the name of God, stranger, answer me," he said, "how dare you presume to personate the Conde Espatorios?"

Stung to the quick, Julian rose, flinging a furious glance on the calm, cold eyes riveted upon him. "Pelistes," he cried, "what means this mockery? You know me well. I am Julian."

"I know you for a base apostate," thundered Pelistes, the great wrath within him finding sudden vent, "an apostate and a traitor. Julian, my friend, was a Christian knight, devoted, true and valiant, but *you*, you have no name. Infidel, renegade, and traitor, the earth you tread abhors you. The men you lead curse you, for you have betrayed Spain and your king. Therefore, I repeat, O man unknown, if you declare you are Don Julian, you lie. He, alas! is dead, and you are some fiend from hell who wears his semblance. No longer can I brook the sight."

So, rising from the table, Pelistes departed, turning his back on Julian, overwhelmed with confusion, amid the scornful smiles of the Moslem knights, who used while they despised him.

As yet, however, all had gone well with him. If a traitor, his treason was successful. He held high command among the Arabs under Tháryk and Mousa, and amassed great wealth by his country's spoil, but he loathed himself more and more. He knew that all men despised him. Too old and too serious for the sensual life of the Moors, and as a warrior little caring to be delicately fed and housed, he sought solace in the company of his masculine but faithful wife, Florinda and his little son.

Florinda, alas! how changed! Her sweet, soft eyes were wild. The delicate bloom upon her cheek had deepened into a fixed red; her mouth, made for kisses, lined and hard, her whole face strangely haggard. No words can paint the anguish she suffered at returning into Spain with her mother. Julian would have folded her in his arms, but she turned from him,—

"Touch me not, my father," she cried, shuddering. "Your hand pollutes me. Why have you brought me here?"

"But, my daughter," answered the unhappy parent, averting his face, not to catch the reproachful anguish of her eyes, "surely it is not for you to accuse me? All I have done was to avenge you."

"Ah!" she answered with a wild laugh. "That is false. I called for you in my trouble to take me

from the court, and the reproachful eyes of Egilona. But never, never, did I bid you visit the wrong I had suffered upon the land. What had Spain to do with me? No, not Florinda, but your own ambition prompted you. To wear the crown of Roderich was your aim. I was but the instrument of your ambition. Let me go," she shrieked, struggling to rush out. "Do you see"— and she pointed upwards to the chain of heights shutting in the city—"the hills of the Sierra take strange shapes—I dare not look on the green valleys! See the flying Goths curse me. They come! They come! showing their gaping wounds. Look, look, the plains run with blood. The figure of the king rides by! I know him! He is fair. It is Roderich, but sick to death. See, his horse falters. He falls. On, on they come, the Gothic host, but with the face of corpses. Surely they did not ride thus to battle? Do you hear the voices in the air? Death, death to Florinda! And I will die, as they bid me!"

With a wild cry that rang round the perfumed roves of the Alcazar, before Julian could stop her, she had rushed to the entrance of a tower which jutted from the walls into the garden, and, bounding up the stairs, barred the upper door.

Her father, speechless with horror, stood rooted to the spot; a moment more, and her slight form leant over the battlements. "Now, now, I come," she shouted. "No ghost can haunt me there," and from the topmost parapet she flung herself!

Hapless Florinda! Thus she passed; but still in that garden, it is said, the spiked palm-leaves

rustle in the breeze, like souls in pain; the canes and the reeds bow their heads over the fountains, the frogs croak sadly in the cisterns, and a Moorish cascade, rushing down a flight of marble steps, sings in voiceless melodies her name.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANDINA AND HER SON PUT TO DEATH BY ALABOR.

At this time a Mussulman Emir, named Alabor, ruled in Cordoba under the Sultan Suleiman of Damascus. Alabor, who was a hard and zealous follower of Mahomet, looked with suspicion on the Christian apostates, who professed his faith simply to save their lives, but who in their hearts regarded the Moslem invaders with the natural hatred of a conquered race.

Of all those Gothic knights who bore arms under Tháryk, he most misdoubted Julian. Certain movements of insurrection which took place among the Christians in Pelayo's possessions in the yet unconquered district of the Asturias, were not without suspicion of powerful encouragement from the south.

Julian, on the death of Florinda, had resolved to send Frandina and his little son back to Africa. Did this mean that he was preparing to play false with his allies? "A traitor once, a traitor ever," thought the crafty Alabor. That he might decide his doubts in true Moslem fashion, he called in one of those miserable impostors called Fakirs, who

wander over the face of the land in the East, and profess to read the future by the stars.

After listening to all the Emir had to say, the Fakir began his incantation. First sand was sprinkled, then squares and circles and diagrams were drawn upon the floor; then, while standing in the midst, he affected to read the lines of fate from a parchment covered with cabalistic characters. "Oh, Emir," he said, "your words of wisdom are justified. Beware of the apostates."

"Enough," replied the Emir. "They shall die."

At that time Julian was still at Cordoba in great grief for the recent death of Florinda. "Tell my lord," he said, in reply to the earnest invitation of Alabor, "I pray him to hold me excused from coming to visit him. Such of my followers as can aid him in any warlike project I freely send; but for myself I am unable."

This was enough for Alabor; here was ample confirmation of the Fakir's prediction. So, not to be behindhand with the voice of fate, he at once condemned to death that wily churchman and renegade, Archbishop Opas, Frandina's brother, who had turned the battle of the Guadalete against Roderich, and with him the two sons of Witica, as possible pretenders to the crown.

Still Julian escaped him by a rapid flight into Aragon. But his wife Frandina and his only son can be reached.

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The castle of Ceuta, which formed part of the Gothic (Iberian) African possessions, then called

Tigitania, stood on an extreme point, a cape of rocky altitude, with bastions and mullioned walls; in the midst rose a central tower or citadel, in which the governor had his abode. Few casements there were, and those looking over the tossing billows of that unquiet Strait which flows between the two continents, so that each coming vessel could be noted long before it touched the quay; a place wholly of defence, and which had therefore been chosen to shelter Julian's wife and son.

Frandina, a woman of masculine courage and keen understanding, had at all times fanned the flame of her husband's ambition. No longer young, she still bore traces of that radiant beauty which had held her lord faithful in the dissolute Courts of Witica and Roderich.

On *her* brow should have rested the pointed diadem worn by the Gothic queens; not on a Moorish stranger who could never learn the customs of the land. Ever hoping to attain the object of her desires, she wilfully worked on the evil passions of her lord, before the calamity which befell Florinda came as a cause and a reason for treason.

No figure of that romantic period stands out in stronger relief than that of Frandina, who moves and speaks before us in her habit as she lived in spite of the long track of centuries.

Without news from Spain, knowing nothing of what has happened at Cordoba to her brother Opas or to her lord, she eats out her heart in ceaseless watching for some white-sailed felucca or swift-rowed *trireme* to bring her tidings. All day she has trod the battlements looking northward, and strained

her eyes in vain. Now she sits in her chamber. An iron lamp casts a weird light on the tapestries which line the walls, the wind moans without about the turrets, and the dash of the waves roll deep below.

Is it the hollow moan of the far-off tempest, or the screech of an owl which makes her start from her seat and eagerly listen?

There is no fall of feet upon the winding stairs, but a well-known voice comes to her so plainly that she rushes to the door. Ere she can reach it, her brother Opas stands before her, habited as she last saw him in the flowing vestments of an archbishop; not in aspect as he appeared in life, but as a wan and shadowy spectre unfolding itself to her sight in the darkness around. Before she can speak he waves her off. He is ghastly pale, and drops of blood seem to fall from his head. With one hand he points to the opposite wall where burned like orbs of fire the word, BEWARE!

"Touch me not, sister," a hollow voice utters; "I am come from the grave to warn you. Guard well your son. The enemies of our house are near." Thus speaking all disappears. His coming and going alike mysterious. Brave as she is, a horror comes over Frandina she never knew before.

Next morning, in the fair sunlight, a swiftly rowing galley brings the news of Opas' death and Julian's flight. Not a moment is to be lost! There in the offing she descries the Moorish fleet, bearing the Emir from Cordoba. The wind blows fair for Africa—before noon he will be off the shore. Fifty Moors, who form part of the garrison, are put

to death with incredible cruelty for fear of treachery: the city gates are closed.

Alabor, whose fury knows no bounds, for he has calculated on arriving before the news had reached Frandina, orders the castle to be assaulted on every side. The walls are carried. Frandina, shut up in the citadel with a forlorn hope, had no thought but for the safety of her son. How conceal him? A mother's wit is keen. Among the living he is not safe, but surely they will not seek him with the dead. Passing down long flights of narrow steps she carries him below into a dark, damp chapel. Scarcely a ray of light penetrates the gloom.

"Are you afraid of the darkness, my boy?" she asks, kissing his warm cheek.

"No, mother. I shall fancy that it is night, and try to sleep."

On one side of a narrow marble aisle, held up by clustered pillars, is the freshly-built tomb of Florinda, whose body has been carried here from Cordoba.

"Do you fear your dead sister, my boy?" again Frandina asks.

"No, mother; the dead can do no harm. Why should I fear Florinda?"

Unbarring the entrance which leads into the vault, Frandina stands on the threshold, her arms around her son.

"Listen," she says, and her kisses rain upon his cheek as she strains him to her bosom in an agony of fear. "The Moors from Spain have sailed over to murder you. Stay here with your dead sister, dear child; her spirit will guard you. Lie quiet for your life!"

The boy kissed his mother, and fearlessly descends the steps, to where the marble coffin holding Florinda's body lay on a still uncovered stand. The faded wreaths cast on it give out a stale perfume.

All that day and the next and the following night the brave boy lay still.

Meanwhile, the troops of the Emir soon penetrate into the citadel, and Alabor himself forces his way into the chamber of the countess.

"My lord," she says, rising from the ponderous chair in which she is seated, a sarcastic courtesy in her tone and in the low obeisance with which she greets him, "you are pleased to profit somewhat ungallantly by the absence of my lord. Do you deem this a fitting way to enter the stronghold of him to whom you owe the conquest of Spain?"

The Emir, surprised by the dignified calm of her demeanour, would have withdrawn, but the fakir who had followed him, pulled the sleeve of his garment, and whispers in his ear: "Ask for her son."

Low as the words were spoken, she heard them and turned pale. "My son, great Alabor, is with the dead. Let him rest in peace."

"Wife of Don Julian," cries the Emir, "you trifle with me. Where is he? Tell me, or torture shall make you."

"Emir," she spoke again, and her calm face shows no trace of fear, "if I have not spoken the truth, may everlasting fire be my portion. He is with the dead."

Alabor is confounded by the composure of her answer. So great was her courage and the dignity with which she faced him, that he was just about to retire, when the fakir again broke in,—

"Let me deal with her, my lord," he said. "The heart of the Emir is too tender. I will find the boy. Soldiers, search the vaults of the castle."

No trace upon the countenance of Frandina betrayed alarm. She herself led the way to the different subterranean chambers within the citadel. When the searchers and the grim old fakir, hideous and naked, save for a ragged cloth about his loins, but esteemed all the more holy from his filth, descended the winding stairs leading to the chapel, Frandina does not falter. In her presence every corner was ransacked by the aid of torches. Nothing was found. But as all were leaving, and she stood already under the arch of the door, to see them all file safely by, some gleam of relief, some unconscious look of joy passed over her face. It was noted by the horrible fakir.

"She rejoices," was his thought. "We are leaving the boy behind. Let further search be made," he commands, turning back the soldiers, whose feet were already on the stairs.

"The boy is with the dead," Frandina had said. Now the words came back to him with a special meaning, for the walls were lined with tombs which stand out conspicuous in the vivid glare of the torches, striking on the marble panels. On one was the escutcheon of an ancient knight, surmounted by a coronet; there a sculptured figure in armour lay at rest; further on a deeply indented effigy in coloured stone, upon which an inscription sets forth the valour of the mouldering bones within. The tomb of Florinda, white and glisten-

ing by the side of the others, displayed her effigy in polished marble, a delicately chiselled form—this at once attracted the attention of the fakir.

"Who lies there?" he asks, turning his twinkling eyes, overshadowed by hairy eyebrows, on the shrinking figure of Frandina, who, trembling from head to foot, sought to hide her face in the deep shadow of a pillared vault, beside the gate of entrance; "this tomb seems the newest."

"It is my daughter's tomb," replied Frandina; but with all her fortitude, she was conscious of a trembling in her voice, and her dry lips could scarcely articulate the words, "She is but lately dead."

The fakir eyed her with a devilish glance. Then, turning to the Moorish soldier, whose eyes rolled under the high turban with a wicked satisfaction at the discomfiting of the Christian,—

"Search within," he orders, his gaze bent on her. Alas! it was soon done. The entrance of the recently entered monument was partly open; within lay what death had spared of Florinda, the bier covered with a fine cloth of Eastern tissue, the hands covered with precious stones.

At first, the Nubian guard, staggered at the strange sight, fall back, but soon recalled by the stern voice of the fakir, they lift the pall. The boy lay underneath! He was asleep, his soft cheek turned upwards, cradled on his arm.

Like a figure carved in stone stood Frandina, but when she saw her son her mother's heart gave way. With a shriek, so piercing that it woke the echoes

in the prisons underneath, she dashed forward and cast herself upon the child.

"Mercy, O Emir! if you have ever known a mother's care! Mercy! mercy! This is my only child—the joy of my life—my little son! Take me for him!" and raising herself on her knees with frantic passion, the boy clinging round her neck, she tries to grasp his hands.

Wrenching himself from her as if she were some noxious animal, Alabor thunders to the guards: "Take this woman's son from her, and bear her hence to the deepest dungeon."

The boy stood alone before the Emir, big tears rolling down his face, not from fear, but for the sake of his mother, whose frantic screams were heard long after they had dragged her away.

If Alabor had but a spark of human pity, he would have melted to the pretty boy, who faced him so bravely, but he had sworn the destruction of Don Julian's race, and his heart hardened within him as he gazed on the innocent eyes. With a keen searching glance he measured the slight figure of the child, and smiled to see how frail he was and small.

"Yusa," he said to the fakir, "be you the keeper of Julian's son. Guard him as you love me." And so he and his guards departed, leaving them alone.

"I pray you," said the boy, undaunted by the looks of his grim companion, who stood holding a torch and watching him under his overhanging eyebrows, "to give me air. I have laid three days in this close tomb, and I am faint."

Without a word they mount the winding stair, until they reach the platform of the keep. Through the high turrets was a wondrous view across the Straits, lined by broad currents of varying blues and greens, to where, dim in the distance, lay the lowlands of Spain. Round and round flew the seagulls, below the waves beat, thundering on the rocks which guard the harbour, cresting back in foam. As the child stood near the battlements, the sea wind raising his curly hair, he gave a cry of joy and claps his hands.

"Do you know what land that is opposite?" asks the fakir, pointing to the dim coast line, an evil leer upon his lips.

"It is my country," is the answer, "we come from Spain; my mother told me."

"Then bless it, my boy; stretch forth your arms."

As the boy loosened his hold of the parapet, the cunning fakir seized him by the waist, and, with a sudden motion, flings him over the battlements. Every bone in his delicate body was broken ere it reached the rock where he lay, a little lifeless heap.

"How fares it with Julian's son?" asks the voice of Alabor, as he appears on the platform of the keep.

"Well," is the brief answer.

"Is he safe?" he asks again, looking round.

"He is safe," answered Yusa; "behold!"

And the Emir looked over and saw the battered form, like a slight speck below, around it the seagulls and vultures already circling.

The following morning, at the break of day, in the great court of the castle, from which all the issues

to the different towers open, Frandina is led out for execution.

That she knows her son is dead, is written in her eyes. No word passes her lips. Like a queen she moves, command in every gesture. With her the Christians of the garrison are brought forth to suffer. As the dismal procession passes round the court, the voice of the insatiable Alabor is heard,—

"Behold, O men of Spain, the wife of your commander. See the ruin to which her treason would have brought you. Let every man take a stone and fling it at her till she dies. He that refuses shall have his head struck off. In the hand of God is vengeance. Not on our head be her blood."

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How or where Julian himself died is not certain. Some chronicles say he perished in the mountains of Navarre, where he had taken refuge; others that he met his death in the castle of Marmello, near Huesca, in Aragon. A violent death of some sort came to the great Kingmaker of Spain.

On his name a perpetual curse rests, and to this day, in Spain "*Julian*" is synonymous with *traitor*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOORS AT SEVILLE—MOUSA AND ABDUL-ASIS.

MEANWHILE the great Emir Mousa is moved by fierce jealousy of the success of Thâryk of "the one-eye." Not only had he overrun the mountains of the Moon and conquered Granada, but the city of Toledo, the capital of northern Spain, is opened to him by the Jews.

This is too much to bear from an inferior. Swift messengers are despatched across the Straits to bid him wait until Mousa arrives. He laughs to scorn the message, and battles as before, his light squadrons penetrating farther and farther into the north of Spain.

Mousa had many sons, but history concerns itself with one only, by name Abdul-asis, pale-skinned, with large romantic eyes and a too tender heart. Abdul-asis sailed with his father across the Straits, and a great army of Moors and illustrious emirs accompany them.

"By the head of the Prophet," quoth Mousa, as he consulted the map of Spain, "that hireling of the one-eye has left us no land to conquer. He is a glutton, who eateth all." But on a more minute examination,

it was found that there was still room in the vast country of Spain for earning further laurels. Thâryk had as yet left Andalusia unconquered.

Andalusia! the very name is poetry—mystic, unfathomed, vague! Reaching far back into fabulous ages where history cannot follow! The home of *jonglerie*, magic and song! Would that I could paint the turquoise of its skies, the endless purple of its boundless plains, the dusky shade of orange and myrtle woods dashed with the vivid green!

What art! what knowledge! And the sensuous charm of a heavenly climate, where winter is never known, and spring passes into summer without a struggle; a land loved by the veiled beauties of the East, looking down through shadows of the fretted *miradores*, marble galleries and *patios*, on barbican towers and Roman walls!

And what a people, cloudless in temper as the heavens! To love flowers, to dance *seguidillas*, and *oles*, and to tell tales, that is your Andalusian —grouped in circles anywhere, under a hedge or a plane tree, on a grassy knoll, in gilded halls, or beneath painted arches. A happy, thoughtless race at all times, taking life and conquest as it comes.

If Andalusia is left to Mousa, Thâryk has lost the fairest jewel of Spain.

. . . . . .

Abdul-asis spoke to his father.

"My lord and father," he said, "as yet I have done nothing to deserve a sword. Behold, when my service is over, and I return to Egypt and appear before the Sultan, what will he say when I answer

that I have gained no battle, and taken no city or castle? Good my father, if you love me, grant me some command, and let me gain a name worthy of your son."

To this Mousa answered: "Allah be praised! The heart of Abdul-asis beats in the right place. Your desire, my son, shall be granted. While I go north, to besiege Merida, you shall march southwards. Seville has defeated the Moors, and quartered Christian troops in the barbican. Be it your care to drive out these unbelieving dogs, and plant once more the Crescent on the Giralda tower. Reduce the city, and spoil the land. Then pass southward, and conquer the province of Murcia, where the Gothic Teodomir defends himself with a handful of troops."

. . . . . .

When Abdul-asis, who read the Persian poets and had himself tried his hand at verse, came in sight of beautiful Seville, lying like a white lily surrounded by the shadows of dark woods, he sighed,—

"Alas! is it for me," he said, "to bring destruction upon so fair a scene? Why am I come to dye with blood those flowery groves, and burden the tide of the Guadalquivir with corpses? Alas! why did not my father choose some place less lovely on which to bring ruin than this the palm-crowned queen of cities!"

Thus mourned Abdul-asis, but not so the fiery Africans whom he commanded. They gazed on the walls with wrath, and longed to flesh their scimitars in Christian blood.

It was with the utmost difficulty that the merciful Abdul-asis stopped the massacre when the city fell. It pained his gentle heart, for its many beauties, specially the palm-planted gardens of the Alcazar, vocal with purling streams and bubbling fountains, so dear to the Arab fancy.

"Here," thought Abdul-asis, as he wandered among the myrtle-bordered paths, fragrant with jasmine and violet, "is the paradise promised to the faithful, but where are the houris, whose white embraces are to make it sweet?" Neither the voluptuous movements of the dancing girls (for Seville in all ages has been famed for the *baille*) moving with uplifted arms and quivering limbs in the *vito* or the *zapateado* intoxicated his senses; nor the voices of the young *niñias* chanting the *maldaquenas* to cyther and lute, drew him from the poetic melancholy which possessed his soul, as he turned his steps from alley to alley, not having yet found the ideal of which he is in search.

But the son of Mousa was a warrior, though the gods had made him poetical. He could not long lie idle, and hastened to fulfil the second mission confided to him by Mousa—to overcome the far-off province of Murcia.

Another faithful knight who had survived the battle of the Guadalete was Teodomir, who, by skilful management, had entrenched himself in Murcia. Not only brave, but singularly prudent, Teodomir had observed that to oppose the Moors openly in the field was to ensure defeat, therefore he had fortified, as best he could, every wild recess of the rocky hills lying toward the coast,

and every rise and knoll whence he could shoot down arrows and missiles. So that when Abdul-asis appeared in the land, cleft asunder by wide rivers and divided by swamps and flats, he encountered no enemy.

"This is a blind warfare," he cried, "a war without a foe. What manner of man is this Goth who wages war in the clouds, and with a few raw troops holds my army in check?"

With a grim smile Teodomir marked the success of his tactics. Spies told him that, in the council of Abdul-asis, retreat had already been mooted, and more and more he insisted upon giving his enemy no chance in the open.

Not so his sons. "What glory is there here?" say these youths. "Let us go forth and face him. We are as good as he. If our men are less disciplined, courage makes up the balance."

"Fools," answered old Teodomir, laying his wrinkled hands upon them, and drawing them to him, that he might make them if possible understand his counsels. "Glory dazzles from afar, but safety is the best when a foe knocks at the door."

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Continued dropping wears a stone. To his great joy, as the sun rose and the weary eyes of handsome Abdul-asis turned towards the marshy plains, beheld Teodomir riding onwards towards the camp at the head of his troops, a son on either hand, the old Goth in the centre in shining armour, with nodding plumes, preceded by flags and horsemen.

"Now Allah be praised!" he exclaims. "At

last! Saddle my war-horse Suleiman, and let all the sheikhs follow me, for it is written in the book of fate that these dogs of Christians are given into our hand."

"Alas! my sons," said Teodomir, reining up his steed, as his practised eye showed him the purpose of the dark body of advancing Arabs, with the green flags, galloping rapidly in the rear, under the cover of the heights. "Alas! it has happened as I said. We are cut off. What can our raw troops do against these well-armed Arabs? Let us make for the fastness of Orihuela while we can."

The sons, however, would not listen, but like vain youths opposed their father's counsel, as did also the captains. The Moor asked for nothing better. He attacked them fiercely in the open plain, cut down the two presumptuous boys before their father's eyes, and beat his troops, who fled on all sides.

Nor could Teodomir stay the flight. Seeing that all was lost, and his sons dead, he seized the bridle of a horse ridden for him by a little page, who tended him in his tent, and who like the rest was spurring onward in full flight.

"Tarry a moment, my son," says Teodomir, grasping the bridle with an iron grip. "Mount behind and part not from me, for I will save thy life!"

So digging his huge spurs into his horse's flanks, at which the well-trained animal, used to his practised touch, reared indignantly on its hind legs and pawed the air, then started off in a wild gallop, swift as the rushing wind. Nor did they pause

until, mounting the steep zig-zag path, they were both safe within the fortress of Orihuela.

There it still stands, a castle of defence, crowned by dark bulwarks on a mountain chain, an out-look for scores of miles over a flat country towards Granada and the sea. Round and round the base winds the road from Alicante, through overhanging lanes, under palm trees and embowering citron woods, broken by red-earthed *barrancas*. The town itself (Auri-welah) still very Eastern, with domed church and castellated towers, the whole district with great tidal rivers cutting through, fertile beyond words.

As the day fell, and the sun went down in lemon-coloured clouds, Abdul-asis approached, thinking to find an easy conquest. But to his amazement, the walls appeared fully garrisoned, and from the keep a proud flag floated, bearing the colours of the Goths.

"How is this?" said the son of Mousa. "Is it a necromancy? Or have these men risen from the earth? With my own eyes I saw Teodomir flying alone, a page riding behind him. His sons are dead, his forces scattered. Who are these but fiends he has summoned by magic to his aid?"

And fear fell upon him as he gazed, and he commanded that no attack be ventured, but that the camp should be formed at the base of the rock until morning.

Upon which Teodomir, who was looking out, took a flag of truce, fastened it to a lance, put a herald's tabard on the back of the page who had fled with him, and a high-crowned hat on his head,

and went down to where the purple tent and the Crescent standard marked the spot where Abdul-asis was to be found.

"I come," said Teodomir, in a tone of lofty courtesy, raising his iron vizor, and showing the stern face of a warrior, the young page behind him, proud of the parti-coloured dress, and swaying the flag of truce in cadence to his words—"I come as a Gothic knight into your presence, most magnanimous son of Mousa, whom men call 'the merciful,' to treat of the surrender of the castle. As you see, our walls are fully manned, and we have food for a lengthened siege. But much blood has flowed. I have lost my sons, and fain would spare the lives of my people. Promise that we may pass unmolested, and when the rising sun tips the circle of mountains towards the East, we will surrender. Otherwise, we will fight until none are left."

Abdul-asis, young in craft and unsuspecting, as became the poetic quality of his soul, was greatly struck with the bold words of the veteran, who stood his ground so valiantly alone against an army. The castle, too, was strong, and appeared amply defended. Generosity in this case was policy. He consented gladly, standing forth alone, a crimson caftan thrown over his armour, the folds of his turban shading his massive Egyptian features and his lustrous eyes. To the articles of capitulation, he hastened to affix his seal. Then he addressed Teodomir,—

"Tell me, bold Christian," said he, "you who have ventured alone into the Moorish camp, now

that we are friends, of what force is the garrison of Orihuela?"

A grim smile spread over the face of the veteran. "Wait and see," was his answer. "With the morning light we will evacuate the place."

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As the sun rises in glory behind the Eastern mountain tips, and its first rays strike upon the battlements, Teodomir appears, followed by a motley crowd of old women, grey-beards, and children tottering down the descent.

Abdul-asis waited with wondering eyes until they had reached the plain. "Where," he said, "O Teodomir, are the valiant soldiers who lined the walls, and have so well maintained the honour of the Goths?"

"Soldiers," answers Teodomir; "by the Lord, I have none. My garrison is before you. These manned the walls. My page"—here he pointed to the stripling disguised in the habit of a herald, the heavy coat dragging after him upon the ground, the helmet falling over his face—"is my herald, guard, and army."

Ere Teodomir had finished speaking, a great uproar rises among the Moors.

"Tear him limb from limb," cry the sheiks. "Cut the throat of the Christian dog. Let him not live who deceives the Moslems of Islam!" But with a stern gesture Abdul-asis interposed: "Let no man dare to touch the Christian knight," he orders. "By righteous fraud he has defended his castle. I command that the rights of war are granted him."

Then, taking Teodomir by the hand he led him to his tent, and orders wine and meat to be served to him as to himself. And in memory of this defence the provinces of Murcia and Valencia, all through the Moorish occupation, were known as "the Land of *Tadmir*" or "*Teodomir.*"

Thanks to the rivalry between these two commanders, Mousa and Tháryk, Gothic Spain had fallen to the Moors in an incredibly short space of time; the banners of the Crescent waved from Pelayo's country in the mountains of the Asturias in the north, to Calpe and the Pillars of Hercules in the south. From the borders of Lusitania (Estremadura) in the west, to the coast of Tarragona and Valencia in the east, and the mighty city of Saragossa, where so many Christians had taken refuge, also yielded.

At length a summons came from Sultan Suleiman at Damascus, to both leaders, to appear before him, to render an account of their conquests and their spoils, as well as to settle the justice of those dissensions which raged so fiercely between them.

Before he left Spain, Mousa addressed a letter to his son, at Seville. "Son of my heart," he wrote, "may Allah guard thee! Thou art of too tender and confiding a nature. Listen to thy father's words. Avoid all treachery, for, being in thyself loyal, thou mayest be caught by it. Trust no one who counsels it. I have placed with thee at Seville, according to the inexperience of thy age, our kinsman, the discreet Ayub. Listen to his counsels in all things, as thou wouldst to myself. Beware, too, O my son, of the seductions of love.

As yet thy heart is untouched. May Allah so preserve it! Love is an idle passion, which enfeebles the soul and blinds the judgment. Love renders the mighty weak, and makes slaves of princes. Farewell. May Allah guard thee and lengthen thy days."

CHAPTER X.

ABDUL-ASIS AND EGILONA.

THE Alcazar at Seville (each Spanish city has its Alcazar) still stands in the centre of the city. Not the decorated palace we see it now, rebuilt by the Toledian Zalubi for Prince Abdurrahman, and afterwards enlarged and beautified by Don Pedro el Cruel, in imitation of the Alhambra of Grenada, but a veritable citadel, surrounded by low tapia walls, on the verge of the tidal current of the Guadalquivir, and flanked by the Gothic tower (*Torre del oro*) which still remains.

Not a poetic ruin, this Alcazar like the Alhambra, but a real castle, whole and entire, ready to receive, to this day, emirs or sultans, kings, queens, or princes, whenever their good pleasure calls them to Seville.

Behind lie the gardens, flushed with roses, oleanders and pomegranates, approached by stately terraces sweet with the familiar scent of carnation, violet, and jasmine. A delicious plaisance formed into a series of squares, divided by low myrtle hedges, and orange-lined walls, cen-

tral fountains bubbling up in sheets of foam, and streams and runnels, tanks and ponds, along which are walks paved with variegated tiles.

The "*azahar*" of a thousand blossoms is in the air, golden oranges hang tempting on the stem, and deeply-tinted butterflies course each other among embowered alleys, leading to gaily painted kiosks and pavilions with latticed walls.

Whether Abdul-asis exacted the tribute demanded by the Moorish law of a hundred Christian virgins, "fifty rich and fifty poor," to adorn his harem, I cannot say. He would scarcely have dared openly to omit it. But instead of choosing from among these damsels that pleased his eye, and selling the rest as slaves, he contented himself with selecting one, and dowered such others who were poor, and married them to his Moors.

In his harem he also maintained many Christian captives as hostages for the land. But they were treated not only with respect, but with luxury, within the precincts of the lovely little *Patio de las Muñecas*—from all time devoted to the harem—the loveliest sheet of snowy lace-work ever beheld. Not a speck of colour on the pure stone; not a badge or motto, only tiers of open galleries, latticed in white.

If ever these dark Eastern beauties return to haunt the glimpses of the moon, it is surely in this *patio* their dazzling forms will linger!

Here they lived a pleasant life, plied their fingers in rich embroidery copied from the looms of Damascus, danced *ole* or *cachucha*, to castanets, or

sang to lute and cyther those wild *malaquenas*, with long sad notes.

Many were even contented with their lot. But all followed with longing eyes the graceful form of the young Emir, putting forth their charms to attract his roving eyes.

"Beware, O my son, of the seductions of love," had written Mousa to his son. "It is an idle passion which enfeebles the heart and blinds the judgment."

And so his discreet cousin Ayub continually repeated, but, spite of these warnings, Abdul-asis often solaced himself in the company of the fair, specially among the Christian captives, who were both beautiful and well-educated. Indeed, it was here the lonely young Emir spent his happiest hours, as the moon mounted into the realm of blue and star after star shone out to be doubled in the basins of the fountains, the murmur of innumerable jets and streamlets falling on the ear.

It was peace, absolute peace, such as comes to those balancing on the bosom of the sea, or on desert plains, or in the mystery of deep forests, or in the grave!

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One night as his eyes range unconsciously into the gloom, he is startled to find that he is not alone.

Deep within a thicket of aloes the lines of a woman's form are visible, seated upon the ground.

"Who can this be?" he asks himself with breathless haste. "I cannot recall having seen

her before, either in the harem or among the captives."

Yet it was a form, once seen, not to be forgotten. Her dark hair hung like a cloud over her shoulders, and her eyes, as she turned them upwards, catching a ray of moonlight, shone out like stars.

"Who is she?" And Abdul-asis rises softly, the better to observe her. "Yes, she is matchless, but that sadness is not natural. Her attitude, her movements are languid and full of pain. Her hands lie weary. She avoids her companions. What can it mean? Some tale of deep sorrow is shut up in her soul. She is under my roof and I am ignorant of her life. I will at once address her."

For some minutes he stood silent, his eyes wandering over the many beauties which disclosed themselves to his gaze; but, to his astonishment, as he looked closer, he perceived from the dark olive of her skin that the stranger must be an Egyptian or a Moor.

At last, moved by a singular emotion, he addressed her.

"Who are you, gentle lady?" he asks, his naturally sweet voice tuned to its softest accents. "Why do you sit alone? confide to me your grief."

"Death alone can end it," is her reply.

"Nay," whispers Abdul-asis, in a voice melting with pity, "fair one, seek not to sacrifice that which Allah has made so perfect. The very essence of loveliness is yours. Let it be mine. As the houris of Paradise dwell under the shadow of the Great Angel's wings, so, lady, shall you dwell under mine. I am Lord of Andalusia. Power is in my

hands. Speak to me," and he drew nearer and touched the tips of her henna-stained fingers. "Have faith in me." If he had dared he would have clasped her to his heart. Never had the veiled fair ones of the harem moved him so.

With his lustrous eyes fixed on hers he waited for an answer, or at least for some sign that she was not displeased. None came.

Now this to Abdul-asis was a new development of woman which served only to heighten the ardour of his sudden passion. Opposition proverbially is a spur to love, and now the old axiom operated in full force upon one who had never known repulse.

Again he assayed to clasp her delicate fingers within his own and gently draw her towards him.

"Light of my life," he murmurs, "speak!" In vain—the lady replied only by her sobs. Nor was it in the power of Abdul-asis to make her speak.

At length—was it the languid beauty of the night, the power of the moon, great in the annals of unspoken love, or some occult mystery communicated to her by his touch,—a rosy bloom rose on her dark cheeks and, withdrawing her hand from his ardent clasp, she suddenly unlocks the mystery of her coral lips.

"I am Egilona," she whispers, as if she feared to confide the name to the night air; "once wife of Don Roderich and Queen of Spain."

Words cannot paint the amazement of Abdul-asis. That the beautiful stranger, known to have become a captive after the defeat of the Guadalete, should

be dwelling within his Alcazar, unknown to himself, seems too astonishing to comprehend! That he too, unconsciously, should have presumed to approach her with the facile dalliance of love grieves his generous soul.

All which he endeavours to express to Egilona in the most eloquent language he could command, while he bends the knee before her as a vassal to his queen.

Then he sighed. Her royal position placed an insuperable barrier between them. Besides, the possession of such an illustrious captive ought, he felt, at once to be notified to the Caliph at Damascus.

"Could he do so?" he asked himself. "Could he run the risk of losing her? No! a thousand times no!"

Chance or fate had thrown her in his way. She was actually a slave in his harem. There she should remain unless she herself wished otherwise.

Fortunately that tiresome person, the discreet Ayub, knew nothing about her. His reproaches, at all events, were not to be encountered. Possibly—ah! possibly—a tender project formed itself in his brain. Would she, the wife of the royal Goth, consent to share an Emir's throne?

But at that moment he was too much overcome and self-diffident to allow himself to pursue so roseate a dream.

Calling together his guards, hidden about the garden, but ever present near his person, Abdul-asis, with a heart torn by conflicting emotions, conducts Egilona through the marble courts to the *Patio de las Muñecas.*

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All that the tenderest love could dictate was showered upon by her by the amorous Emir. She lived in the royal apartments, and a special train of slaves, eunuchs and women attended upon her. Before the gold-embroidered draperies of her door turbaned guards stood day and night, holding naked scimitars. Her table was served with the same luxury as that of a sultana. When she went abroad into the streets of Seville she rode on a beautiful palfrey, caparisoned with silken fringes, a silver bridle and stirrup, and a bit of gold. At the sound of the tinkling bells which hung about the harness, all who meet her prostrate themselves to the earth, as though the Emir himself were passing. Even the muezzin, ringing out the hour of prayer from the galleries of the Giralda, is commanded to pronounce a blessing on her head.

Such a complete change in the life of Abdul-asis could not but arouse the wrath of the discreet Ayub. Numberless were the times he tried to waylay him, always ineffectually however, for the Emir gave orders he was not to be admitted.

One day they did meet in the outer Patio de las Bandieras (where now the superb portal of Don Pedro blazes in the sun), just as Abdul-asis was mounting his horse for the chase.

"Hold, my cousin and lord," cries Ayub, laying hold of his bridle. "Tarry a while, I pray you, for the sake of our kinship. Am I a dog, that you should drive me with kicks and imprecations from your door?"

"Far from me be such a thought," replies Abdul-asis, colouring. "No one thinks better

of you than I. But, my cousin, permit me now to depart. Another time we will pursue the subject."

"Bear with me now awhile rather," cries Ayub, detaining him by the folds of his embroidered robe. "O Abdul-asis, remember the words of your father: 'Beware, my son, of the seductions of love. It renders the mighty weak and makes slaves of princes.'"

The colour on the face of the Emir deepens into a flush of wrath. He was weary of hearing these words ever repeated—yet he kept silence.

"Time was, my cousin," continues the discreet Ayub, "when you listened to my words, and all went well. Now, for the sake of a strange woman, a slave, a captive, you are bartering your kingdom."

At this coarse allusion to the royal Egilona Abdul-asis could scarcely resist the temptation of enlightening Ayub as to her real condition, but he forbore.

"It is my right, O Ayub, to love whom I choose," he answers coldly, again preparing to mount his horse.

Again Ayub arrests him, and, forgetting all respect in the heat of his argument, fairly shouts in his ear,—

"Yes, O son of the great Mousa, but not like that glorious warrior. Yes, free to love a whole tribe of slaves if you please, gather all the beauties from the corners of the earth, the houris of Paradise, if you can get them, but you have no right to sacrifice your throne and bring ruin on your race."

To this torrent of reproach Abdul-asis answers not a word. Steadying by his touch and voice the

exasperated horse, which had now become restive under the delay, as if sharing in the irritation of his master, Abdul-asis surveys his cousin as if to demand what more abuse he had in store—a look and manner which only exasperated Ayub all the more.

"What kind of a sovereign are you," he continues, in the same shrill voice, which echoed round the court and could not fail to reach the ears of the guards and eunuchs, however unmoved their countenances might remain, "who pretend to have no time to administer justice in the Gate as your Moorish ancestors did? Who neglect to review your troops in the great plains about the city and to take counsel upon the affairs of state with the chiefs and counsellors sent hither by the Caliph? Can you expect that he will continue you as governor, when the report of your acts comes to his ears? With you will fall your father Mousa and your brothers in Africa. Who is this witch who has overlooked you? Send her away, or by the name of Allah I will no longer screen you!"

Even the discreet Ayub paused here for lack of breath, and the young Emir, quickly vaulting into the saddle, rides off in a cloud of dust, followed by his attendants.

Yet, spite of these stinging words, his passion for Egilona was so consuming, that although he felt their truth and that he was entering upon a career full of danger, he could neither pause before it was too late, nor turn back altogether.

Day and night her image pursues him. Spite of all the warnings of Ayub, who, having once broken

the ice, never ceases his threats and reproaches, every hour is devoted to her. In the shade of the Alcazar gardens, on the river Guadalquivir, where they float in a silver barge with perfumed sails, under canopies of cloth of gold and silver; within the gaudy halls, sculptured with glowing panels of arabesque, painted roofs and dazzling dados; and in the Baños, full of breezes from the river and currents of free mountain air, planted with such shrubs and herbs as are used to scent the water, he is ever at her side.

So well did Egilona love the Baños, which reminded her of her African home, that she was wont to say to her favourite slave, the same dark-skinned girl from Barbary who had followed her from Toledo, "When I am dead, Zora, bury me here."

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Yet all this time Egilona had never opened her heart to Abdul-asis. Nor, eager as he was to know her history, had he ventured further to urge her, so great was his respect.

At length, of her own accord, she unveiled the mystery.

"Think not, O noblest of Moors," she says, in a voice so soft it seemed to lull the agitation of his heart, "that I am insensible to your devotion. I dare not question my own heart."

"My love, my sultana!" is all that he could answer, casting himself on the earth before her. "Happy destiny that I was born to be your slave!"

Egilona at once raised him, and entreated him to sit beside her..

"No, Abdul-asis, it is not within the power of

woman to resist you. My heart has long been yours. But," and she sighs, and big tears gather in her mild eyes and drop one by one upon the hand Abdul-asis held clasped in his, "I fear that with my love I bring you an evil destiny. Remember the end of Roderich. Can I, oh, can I sacrifice you to the chances of the dark fate that pursues all who love me?"

The face of the Emir grew pale as he gazed at her. Spite of himself, an icy hand seemed to touch his heart and chill it into stone. These were the warnings of the discreet Ayub from her own lips.

Did ruin really lie in those matchless eyes? Was that pure chiselled face indeed the messenger of evil? A rising wave of passion cast these sinister forebodings from him, and, with a calm and steady voice, he answers,—

"But why, my queen, should you, the wife of Roderich, be answerable for his doom? It is said that the Gothic king tempted the infernal powers when he forced open the portals of the Tower of Hercules and let forth the demons confined there upon the earth."

"That is true," answers Egilona, "and the rash act was doubtless the cause of his death. Still the misfortunes which cling to me seem to have led on to his. Had he not loved me he might have married the daughter of Don Julian."

"And what misfortunes has my Egilona encountered? You forget I know not who you are, or how you came here."

Then she recounted to him her royal birth, and how from childhood she had been affianced to the

son of the King of Tunis; the history of the storm which threw her on the coast of Spain; the Alcaide of Denia (now Malaga), upon whom she had made so favourable an impression. (Here the enamoured Emir drew a deep sigh, and pressed his lips upon her hand as she lay half-reclining upon a pile of gold-worked cushions.)

"Again I wore the bridal robes," she continues, "which I had on when I was shipwrecked, as I awaited Don Roderich."

Here was a pause, Egilona drops her eyes and is silent. The veins on the forehead of Abdul-asis suddenly swell with agony. Every word she utters plunges a dagger in his breast. "This was the man she loved," he told himself. "By the Prophet, she will never be to me as she was to him—dog of a Christian!"

Meanwhile, guessing his thoughts, a thousand blushes suffuse the cheeks of poor Egilona and dye her olive skin with a ruddy brilliance. "What could I do?" she asks in a plaintive voice. "I had broken through the bonds of Eastern custom; I had despised the laws of the harem; I had stood face to face with man. The beauty and variety of the outer world was known to me. The visits of Don Roderich—"

"Say no more, my queen!" exclaims the generous-hearted Abdul-asis, ashamed of his jealous weakness. "Could anyone approach you without love? I guess the conclusion."

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When the discreet Ayub was informed of the purpose of his cousin to wed the Gothic Queen, he

covered his head and sat in sackcloth and ashes. In this unbecoming guise he forced himself into the presence of the Emir.

"Are you mad?" he cries, "O son of Mousa? Remember the words of your great father, bravest among the chiefs of Damascus: 'Beware of love, my son. It is a passion—'"

"Enough, enough," answers Abdul-asis, rising from the divan on which he had thrown himself, as the spectacle his cousin presented had moved him to laughter, "I have heard these words before."

"And you will hear them again, O son of my kinsman. I will not forsake you, by Allah! for his sake, nor give you over to the evil genius who possesses you."

But the wrongs of Ayub, however terrible, melted as wax before the fierce fire of the Emir's love.

His nuptials with Egilona were celebrated with great pomp. Nor did possession cool his ardour. He lived but for her. He consulted with her in all the affairs of his government, and rejected the counsels of the discreet though most troublesome cousin.

For a time no evil consequences ensued, and the fears of Ayub were almost lulled. Yet who can resist his fate?

Reposing one day in a gorgeous chamber of the Alcazar—(it is now called the room of Maria de Padilla, but it was then known as the Hall of the Sultana)—Egilona drew from under the folds of her mantle a circlet of gold.

"See, love," said she, "the crown of Roderich the Goth. Let me place it on your brow. It will become you well."

Holding up as she spoke a steel mirror attached to her girdle by a rope of pearls, she calls upon him to admire the majesty of his appearance.

With a sigh he looks at himself, the crown placed on the folds of his turban, then put it from him and, like Cæsar, sighed that it could not be his.

"My love," says Egilona, replacing it, "the wearer of a crown is a sovereign indeed. Believe me, the Christians are right; it sanctifies the rule."

A second time, like Cæsar, Abdul-asis put the crown from him. Yet did his fingers linger on the rim, while he endeavoured to explain to Egilona that, as a Moslem, she must not urge him to go against the custom of his nation.

Still Egilona insists, her soft fingers clasped in his, her tempting lips resting on his own.

"There has been no real king in Spain," she urges, "without a crown. I pray you, dear husband, do not refuse me."

At first it was only worn in private, but the fact was too strange not to be noised abroad. The Moorish damsels in attendance on Egilona and the guards and eunuchs which fill an Eastern Court bore the news from mouth to mouth as a strange wonderment.

"The Emir not only has wedded a Christian wife, but he wears the Gothic crown," is whispered in Seville. "He seeks to rule us as Roderich did." To this was added by the many-tongued voice of calumny, "that not only Egilona had induced him to become a king, but, oh horror of horrors, that he was surely a Christian!"

"By the head of the Prophet, I swear it is a lie!" cried the discreet Ayub to the ancient counsellors Mousa had placed about his son, who, in their long dark robes, gathered round him in dismay. "Not a day passes but Abdul-asis may be seen offering up his prayers in the Zeca, his face turned towards Mecca. Ask the muezzin at the Giralda if it be not so. Five times a day does he prostrate himself; and as to purifying, there is not water enough in Seville to serve him."

"But the crown, most powerful Vizir, does not the Emir wear a crown?"

At this Ayub, feigning a sudden fit of coughing, turned aside. "I have never seen it," he answers at last; "I swear I have never seen it."

"That may very likely be," is the answer; "but it is well known, and for a Moslem to wear a Christian crown is against the laws of the Koran. Allah Achbar! we have spoken." So, covering their faces with their robes, as those that mourn the dead, they departed from the presence of Ayub.

Enemies were not wanting to Abdul-asis in Seville, his own, and those who hated him as the son of the famous Mousa.

These wrote hasty letters to Damascus, accusing him not only of detaining captives of price, but as seeking to establish the Gothic kingdom by right of Egilona, acknowledged as their queen by all the Christians.

Now Suleiman, a new Caliph, was on the throne, and it so happened that he cherished a deep hatred against Mousa, whom he had divested of all his high

commands in favour of the One-Eyed, who had brought rich spoil to Damascus.

The Caliph waited for no proofs, he wanted none. It was enough that Abdul-asis was accused, and that his death would be the heaviest punishment he could inflict on the unfortunate Mousa.

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When the fatal scroll was laid before Ayub the parchment dropped from his hand.

"Allah is great!" cried he, as soon as words came to him. "It is known of all men I have taken no part in my cousin's marriage; rather that I have always opposed it. Beware, said I, of the seductions of love. Avoid the strange woman upon whose face is written an evil fate. As long as I could I counselled him well, as I had promised his father. Now the Caliph's commands must be obeyed, else we shall all lose our heads, which will not keep that of Abdul-asis on his shoulders."

Thus spoke Ayub, discreet to the last. As long as he could shield the Emir he had done so loyally. Now that he must die he hastened to assist at his downfall.

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The assassins came upon them as they sat together beneath a purple awning, drawn from tree to tree. Four naked Nubians, black as night, with four naked scimitars. So lightly fell their bare feet as they glided behind them, they looked like some hideous vision of the night.

Before the dawn of day, Abdul-asis and Egilona had risen, disturbed by the noise of the populace without. No one would tell them what it meant. While the Emir was preparing to go himself to the walls,

to inquire if Egilona had returned from praying in a little chapel she had caused to be erected within the limits of the harem, their fate came to them. Together they fell under the cruel steel, together their bodies lay exposed upon the stones.

The dogs of the palace would have mangled them, but that some friendly hand gathered them up and interred them secretly in one of the many squares of the garden.

Where they lie, no one knows, or if it was the discreet Ayub who buried them. But as the time of the year comes round when they suffered, in the hour preceding dawn, stifled sighs and groans are heard in the angles of the walls, and a universal tremor runs through the space; although the outer air is still, a sudden tempest seems to rustle, the fan palms quiver as if shaken by unseen hands, the pale-leaved citrons bow their heads to a mysterious blast, clouds of white blossoms cover the earth like snow, and the leaves of the yellow jasmine fly as if with wings.

Then a clash of scimitars breaks the silence, the shadowy form of a stately lady floats across the pavement, closely followed by the figure of a Moor, who sighs and wrings his hands, gliding on into the thickness of the woods, when a dark cloud gathers and they disappear.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOORS AT CORDOBA.

At Cordoba we come upon the full splendour of the Moors, a whole world of chivalry, *jonglerie*, magic and song, from the old East, their home. What noble devotion to their race! What unalterable faith! What generous courage in life, and silent constancy in death! What knowledge, could we but grasp it!

We know but what is left to us of their outward life in Andalusia and Granada. Their exquisite sense of proportion and colour, in palaces vermillion walled and vocal with many waters; the massive grandeur of barbicans of defence, the sensuous charm of lace-covered chambers and gigantic leap of arch, tower and minaret, destined to live as their mark for ever.

Their whole existence in Spain is a romance anomalous but dazzling. A nation within a nation, never amalgamated. A people without a country; a wave of the great Moslem invasion cast into Europe; a brilliant phantasmagoria, various and rare!

The Moors took no solid root in Spain as the

Saxons in England or the Arabs in Sicily, but lived as an exotic race, divided from the Christians and from the Jews by impassable barriers of religious customs and laws; their occupation but a long chivalric struggle for a foothold in the land they had *gained* but never conquered.

Not all the fiery valour of the African was proof against the obstinate resistance of the Goths. Never was defence more complete! In the midst of apparent victory loomed defeat!

A new era opens in Cordoba, with its million inhabitants and three hundred mosques, in the reign of the Caliph Abdurraman, of the race of the Ummayha, who overthrew the rival princes sent by the Sultan of Damascus.

After him, from A.D. 756 to A.D. 1000, ten independent sultans reigned in Cordoba, their wealth and luxury like the record of a tale.

Most notable among these were three other Abdurramans, Hakin, surnamed "the bookworm," Hisham, and Hazin, not to forget the great Sultan and statesman Almanzor, a Moorish Lorenzo da Medici, collecting books all over the world, and drawing learned men to his court even from remote Britain.

While the north, in perpetual warfare, was plunged in the darkness of the Middle Ages, solid learning, poetry and elegant literature charmed the mind of the enlightened Moors, the pioneers of civilization in Europe.

At Cordoba Averroes, the great Grecian scholar, translated and expounded Aristotle. Ben Zaid and Abdulmander wrote histories of the people at

Malaga. Ibn el Baal searched the mountains and plains to perfect a knowledge of botany; the Jew Tudela was the successor of Galen and Hippocrates; Albucaris is remembered as a notable surgeon, some of whose operations coincide with modern practice; and Al Rasi and his school studied chemistry and rhetoric.

Not only at Cordoba, but at Seville, and later at Granada, colleges and schools were endowed, and libraries founded in which the higher sciences were taught, which drew the erudite of the Moslem world from all parts of the globe, and became the resort of Christian students anxious to instruct themselves in superior knowledge.

And Christian knights came also to perfect themselves in chivalric fashions and martial exercises, as well as to master the graceful evolutions of the "tilt of reeds" in the tourneys of the Moors.

From the court of the first Abdurraman came "*la gaya ciencia,*" poetic discussions of love and chivalry transplanted later to the Court of Provence.

In architecture no building that ever was erected can compare to the elegance of his Mesquita (come down to us almost entire) as a monument of the taste and culture of age. The most mystic and astounding of temples, with innumerable aisles of double horse-shoe arches, suspended like ribbons in mid-air, resting on pillars of jasper, *pavonazzo*, porphyry, and verde antique crossing and re-crossing each other in a giddy maze of immeasurable distances, red, yellow, green and white, dazzling the eye in a very rainbow of colour!

No windows are visible, and the light, weird and

grim, comes as from a cave peopled by demons; no central space at all, but vistas of endless arcades, which for a time the eye follows assiduously, then turns confused, and the brain reels.

Deep hidden in the heart of the temple is the throne or *makserah*, a marvel of embroidered stone, where the Sultan takes his seat. Here the Koran is read in the pale light of scented tapers and torches, and those ecstatic visions evoked by the Faithful of a sensual paradise of dark-haired Houris.

Opposite is the Zeca, or holiest of holies, turned towards Mecca, where the gorgeous decorations of the East blend with Byzantine mosaics of vivid colours on a gold ground. A most lovely shrine, a great marble conch-shell for the roof, the sides dazzling with burnished gold, and round and round, deep in the pavement, the footprints of centuries of pilgrims.

Such is the Mesquita of Cordoba in our day, the desecrated shelter of an old faith, a sanctuary rifled, a mystery revealed!

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But how glorious in the time of the great Abdurraman when the blaze of a thousand coloured lanterns, fed with perfumed oil, played like gems upon jewelled surfaces, vases and censers filled with musk and attar, making the air heavy with fragrance, golden candelabras blazing among mosaics, crescent banners floating beside the alminbar or pulpit, where green-turbaned Almuedans mount to intone the Selan, as the Sultan emerges from a subterranean passage leading from the Alcazar, treading on Persian carpets sown with jewels, to take his place on a golden throne within the *makserah*,

surrounded by swarthy Africans, bare-armed Berbers, helmeted knights bristling with scimitars, Numidians with fringed head-bands and golden armlets, superb Emirs, wandering Kalendars, who live by magic, the dervish of the desert, and hoary Imaums in full gathered robes.

Then the talismanic words are heard from the open galleries of the Giralda from which the Muezzin calls to daily prayer: "There is no God but Allah, and Mahomet is his prophet." To which the prostrate multitude echoes "God is great," each one striking the pavement with his forehead, and the sonorous chant answers "Amen."

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When Abdurraman reigned the lonely quarter beyond the Mesquita swarmed with Alcazar, Bazars, Cuartos, Zacatines, Baños and Alemadas.

Three miles to the north, sheltered under the green heights of the Sierra Morena, rose the plaisance of Medina-a-Zehra, created by him. A *congerie* of kiosks and pavilions entered by gates of blue and yellow porcelain, overtopping woods of exotic shrubs, choice plants, and rare fruit trees—here the Safary peach (nectarine) was first ripened in Europe—divided by the fountains, canals and fish-ponds so dear to the Arab fancy. Twelve statues in pure gold set with precious stones spouting perfumed water within a *patio* girt in by crystal pillars.

Hither came emirs, ambassadors, merchants and pilgrims, all agreed that nothing could be compared to these matchless gardens. And besides Ez-Zahra there were other monuments, which have

all disappeared under the mantle of green turf that lines the banks of the Guadalquivir. Not a stone left of the pavilion of Flowers, of Lovers, and of Content, the palace of the Diadem, evidently destined for the royal jewels, and another called after the city of Damascus.

About were many noble streets and plazas with baths and mosques, for next to the mosque stood the bath in credit among the Moslem, and as such despised by the Christians to that point, that after Ferdinand and Isabella drove the Moors out of Spain, their grandson, Philip II., ordered the destruction of all public baths as relics of Mahomedanism.

CHAPTER XII.

ABDURRAMAN, SULTAN OF CORDOBA.

ABDURRAMAN, first Sultan of Cordoba, was a kindly-hearted man, with none of the traditional cruelty of the Arab, eloquent in speech, and of a quick perception—quite the Caliph of Eastern tales. Never in repose, never intrusting the care of his kingdom to viziers, intrepid in battle, terrible in anger and intolerant of opposition; yet ready to follow the biers of his subjects, pray over the dead, and even to mount the pulpit of the mosque on Fridays and address the people.

His majestic presence and dark, commanding face, lit up by a pair of penetrating eyes, shadowed by thick black eyebrows, inspired fear rather than love in those around him, and though it was said of him "he never forgot a friend," it was added, "nor ever forgave an enemy."

As he passed at evening alone into the garden of Ez-Zahra, the porphyry, jasper and marble of the pavement absorbed by the intense blue of the sky—all his attendants fell back. His brow was knit with thought, for the fame of the victories of Charles Martel troubled him sorely. He knew that

in knowledge and science the Frankish king was as a peasant compared to him, yet his name was in all men's mouths as the conqueror of the Moors.

Not only did Charles Martel, after the victory of Tours, excel him in renown, but the remnant of the Goths, driven out of the cities of Spain, had taken refuge in the mountains bordering the Bay of Biscay, among the caves and untrodden defiles of the Asturias, and, small and insignificant as they were, still defied him.

Just and generous in character, the Sultan would have gladly drawn to him this patriotic band by an equitable rule, if they would have submitted; but the obstinate endurance of the Spaniard was never more displayed than in the fierce determination of these fugitives never to yield.

Thinking of all this, Abdurraman heaved a deep sigh. His soul was full of sympathy for the brave Goths, but, as Sultan, he was bound to suppress what was in fact open rebellion.

Long did he pace slowly up and down, musing in a silence broken only by the distant click of the castanets from the quarter of the harem, where the light of coloured lanterns shone out athwart huge branches of magnolia and pepper trees.

That these sounds of revelry were not to his taste was shown by the disdainful glance he cast in that direction, and a certain gathering about him of the dark caftan which hung from his shoulders.

Turning his eyes in the direction of one of the many illuminated kiosks standing out clear in the twilight, he paused, as if expecting some one to appear.

Nor did he wait long : a dark figure emerges from the gloom, the features of the face so dusky that but for the general outline of the figure it might have passed unseen as a phantom of the night.

"Mahoun," says the Caliph, sharply, as the vizier approached and, prostrating himself on the earth, awaited his commands, "stand up and tell me what tidings from the north."

"By the Prophet, O Caliph," answers Mahoun, crossing his arms as he rose to his feet, and bending his supple body in a deep salaam, "tidings of many colours—good and bad."

"Give me the bad first, O Vizier! After a storm the sun's rays shine brightest. Proceed."

"Don Pelayo, the Goth, son of the Christian noble, Dux of Cantabria, murdered by his kinsman," continued the vizier, "or, as some call him, Pelagius—for these Gothic dogs much affect Roman names—the leader of the Christians, has disappeared. Nor can the cunning inquiries of Kerim, whom in your wisdom you have placed as governor over these newly-conquered provinces, obtain any record of where he has gone. Some say to the French Court to ask succour for the remnant who still cling to his fortunes; others that he has died by treachery, or fallen in fight. So constant were these rumours, O Caliph, that the Goths, discouraged by his long absence, had fallen into disunion; the wisest (and they are few) were willing to submit to the rule of Kerim; the greater part (fools) prepared to elect the Gothic Infanta Onesinda, his sister, as queen—when of a sudden, Pelayo himself returns, and, with a horde of

Christian beggars at his back, raises the standard of revolt in Galicia near Gijon."

"What!" cries the Caliph, suddenly interested, "is Pelayo the youth, cousin of Don Roderich, who fought at the battle of the Guadalete close to his chariot, and never left him until he himself vanished from the battlefield? I have heard of Pelayo. He is of royal birth."

"The same, O Caliph. Grandson of King Chindaswinto, his father, murdered by that unclean beast Witica, predecessor of Roderich. Pelayo ends the line of Gothic princes. Kerim despises him as a despicable barbarian shut up on a mountain, where his followers die of hunger; they have no food but herbs and honey gathered in the rocks. Let not my Lord regard him."

"Call you this good news, O Mahoun? A hero is ever a hero, even in rags! Though he is my enemy, I respect his valour. Had Roderich fought with like courage in the defence of Spain, we might now be eating dates in our tents under our native palms. The courage of the chief represents the spirit of the nation, as the flash of the lightning precedes the thunderbolt. *One* cannot scathe without the other."

"But, O Caliph of the Faithful," interrupts the vizier, again prostrating himself to the ground, "the good news is yet untold. Pelayo's sister, Onesinda, is now in our hands,—Kerim, the Governor of Gijon, has captured her."

A smile of satisfaction overspread the Caliph's face. Then, as other thoughts seemed to gather in his mind, he raised his hand and thoughtfully

passes it across the thick black curls of his beard.

"Surely all courtesy has been used towards this royal lady? I would rather that Kerim had shown his skill in overcoming men. Do Mussulmen wage war on women and children? I know Kerim as a valiant leader in the fight, but I misdoubt much his courtesy towards this daughter of the Goths. Are we not well founded enough in Spain to spare this lady?"

"Yes, confined within the strong walls of your harem. Make her your Sultana, O Caliph, she will be free, and, subdued by the wisdom of your lips, will bring her countrymen with her; otherwise she is too important a hostage to surrender. For his sister's sake Pelayo himself may yield."

"Never, if I know him," exclaims Abdurraman, "while the fountain of life flows within his veins—never! Dishonour not the noble Goth so far. To turn a Christian maiden into a slave would be honour, for a Gothic princess a sore degradation. Mahoun, I want no Sultana to share my throne. 'Beware of the wiles of women,' saith the sage. By the help of the Prophet, I will still steer clear. But that this noble lady shall have cause to extol the courtesy of the Moslem is my command."

"How then shall we deal with her?" asks the vizier with anxious haste, too well aware of the generous nature of the Caliph. "If Pelayo lays down his arms, the Infanta might be escorted back in safety to the rocks and caverns he makes his home, but if he still raises the standard of

revolt, a bow-string would better suit the lady's throat."

"Silence, slave," replies Abdurraman in a deep voice. "Great Allah! Shall we degrade ourselves to make success depend on the life of a woman? Summon her at once here. When she arrives in Cordoba, let her immediately be conducted to my harem. Let orders be given for her immediate departure from Gijon with suitable attendants."

"Oh, justest of men and greatest of rulers," answers the vizier, "permit your slave yet to speak one word. These infidels must be reached through their women. Leave, I pray you, Onesinda to the Governor of Gijon, and she will be the bait to catch her brother Pelayo."

"I have spoken," answers Abdurraman, haughtily, and turned away. "Be it according to my commands."

Deep was the obeisance with which this order was received, but the astute vizier had views of his own. In the main he was a faithful servant of his lord, but where a woman was concerned, he deemed it no crime to temper obedience with interest. An unbeliever! the sister of a Goth! what was this Onesinda but a toy, a slave, honoured by a glance from her conqueror? Had the Caliph commanded her immediate execution he would willingly have obeyed, but to bring her to Cordoba after what he knew of her treatment at Gijon was more than his head was worth.

Now it so happened that the Governor of Gijon was his friend, and that Mahoun knew much more about Onesinda than he intended to impart. Her

capture had been a cruel stratagem, and at this very time she was forcibly lodged in the harem of Kerim.

The vizier had not dared altogether to conceal the important fact of her capture from the Sultan, but that she should reach Cordoba alive and tell the tale of her misfortunes, was not at all his intention. The passion Kerim had conceived for her was well known to Mahoun, and that she was surrounded by Moorish slaves, who not only urged his suit by threats and persuasion, but watched her every action. If Onesinda did not yield to the desires of Kerim, her brother's fate was certain, were he taken dead or alive.

On Pelayo rested the hope of the fugitive Goths. The last of the long line of hereditary princes, all the trust of the conquered lay in him. That this base intrigue should come to the knowledge of the Caliph was death to all concerned. Not all the bribes offered him by Kerim in rich stuffs, jewels and slaves, could blind the astute vizier to the danger of his position.

"May Allah confound Kerim and his harem!" he exclaimed in a rage, as he paced the gardens after the Sultan's departure until late into the night, his silken sandals falling lightly on the coloured patterns drawn upon the walks. "Why could not the dark-skinned beauties of Barbary content him without meddling with the pale-faced Goth? Truly the flag of the Crescent has triumphed over the Cross in the length and breadth of Spain; but it is not wise to provoke a fallen people. These Goths have the endurance of the camel of the desert, which lives

long without food or drink, but even that patient animal will turn upon his driver if he rains down blows upon him causelessly. Better let the infidels starve in holes and caverns than bring them down into the plains, bent on a desperate revenge. A curse on Kerim! The Sultan forgets nothing. He will ask for Onesinda. What in the name of Allah am I to reply?"

CHAPTER XIII.

ONESINDA AND KERIM.

KERIM-EL-NOZIER, the Governor of Gijon in Gallicia, is a Berber, infinitely less cultured than the Moors, and the distance from the capital at Cordoba has made him almost independent of all rule.

Little did the noble-minded Caliph, Abdurraman, guess what was passing at this moment in the remote peninsula at Gijon, sheltered on one side by the dark hill of Santa Catalina, on the other exposed to the full force of the rollers of the Bay of Biscay, and that the governor he had appointed was a tyrant who knew no law but his own will.

Kerim is not a warrior to please a lady's eye. The voluminous folds of a white turban rest on a forehead bare of hair, a rough and matted beard curls on his chin and reaches to his ears, in which hang two uncut emeralds. He is low in stature and corpulent in person. His long dark arms are bare, ornamented with glittering bangles, his body swathed with a gaudily striped cloth over a rich vest, and full trousers descend to his feet. Sudden and abrupt in his movements, he sits uneasily on a

raised daïs covered with skins, a drapery of Eastern silk over his head. A strong perfume of attar pervades the recess, lined with divans, at the extremity of an immense Gothic hall, open at the opposite end, and divided into separate apartments by oriental screens and tapestry.

The recent conquests in the North had given the Moors as yet no time to erect either dwellings, mosques, or baths, those necessities of Eastern life, and they were fain to accept the rough habitations and castles of the Goths as they find them.

Terrible is the expression of his eyes, the white against the tawny sockets, as he turns them full on a slender form before him, wrapped in an embroidered mantle, held in the strong grasp of a Nubian slave. A naked scimitar lies on the ground and the shadow of a mute darkens the curtained entrance.

Of the lady's face nothing is seen. She holds her hands clasped over her eyes, as if to shut out the repellent visage of the Berber.

Taking in his hand, from a salver placed on the ground, one of the jewelled goblets which lay on it, and filling it with sherbet, Kerim rises to his feet.

"I drink," he says, in a loud jarring voice, "to the success of the Goths and of Pelayo. Will you pledge me, Christian lady?"

No answer comes from the veiled figure, but the trembling of the drapery shows that she is convulsed with fear.

"Unhand the Infanta," says Kerim to the Nubian, "and retire."

Between them lay the scimitar, catching the light.

"Onesinda," and Kerim seizes her passive hand, "listen! Kerim is not the senseless tyrant you deem him. But before I unfold my projects to your ear, I warn you to take heed. You are my prisoner, held by the right of war. A motion of my hand and that fair skin is dyed as crimson as the petals of the fiery pomegranate expanding in the heat of noon. As yet you have refused all speech with me. Urge me not too far, I warn you."

"Alas!" answers Onesinda, speaking with quick breath, as she tore asunder the drapery which fell upon her face and displays an ashy countenance belying her bold words, "I do not fear death, but infamy. Now, God be gracious to me, for the succour of man is vain." As she spoke she drew herself back to the farthest limit of the curtained space in an attitude, not of resistance, for that was useless, but as one unwilling to provoke assault, yet if offered, resolved to repel it to the utmost of her power.

She who, were her brother dead, would be proclaimed by the small remnant of her people Queen of the Goths, was fair as became her race and of good proportions. A native loftiness in features and bearing took from her all notion of the insipidity which attaches itself to that complexion; her eyes were blue, untouched by the unnatural glitter so loved by the Moorish women, and her profuse flaxen hair fell in ringlets about her neck, on which a solid gold chain and heavy medallion rested. A kirtle over a vest, open at the throat, of blue taffetas worked in coloured silks, formed a loose robe

lined with fur, and a veil of silk, falling at the back of her neck, concealed the snowy skin of her neck and bosom and served as a covering to her hair.

"You have no reason to fear me," cries Kerim, but the base passion which looked out of his eyes gave to his words a very different interpretation.

"There can be no peace between us," answers Onesinda, trembling in every limb, as she presses closer and closer to the wooden pillars at her back. "Had your purpose been honest, you would not have captured me treacherously and kept me here. Pelayo's sister will never yield to force. To plant that steel in my breast," pointing to the richly-set dagger he wore at his waist, "is the only service you can do me."

"But you must listen," retorts Kerim, drawing so near his hot breath fell on her cheek; "for the sake of Pelayo. To further the good of this growing kingdom of the Moors, I desire to ally myself with the royal blood of Spain and rally about me those Christians who still gather round your brother. The throne of Cordoba is too distant, the empire too vast. Abdurraman needs able lieutenants. Kerim will free him of the rule of these northern provinces and govern them himself. It is a feeble mind which waits for Fortune's wheel, the brave must seize it, and turn it for themselves. Under me the sons of the Goths shall serve, Alonzo and Friula and the rest, Pelayo above all, next to myself, for the fair Onesinda's sake! Again I ask you, Christian Princess, will you pledge me to our success?" And his hand again seizes the goblet, which he held to her lips.

Had Onesinda seen the look which accompanied this gesture she would have sunk insensible to the earth, so revolting was the effect of love in such a form, so savage and brutal the nature; but her head had fallen on her bosom, and her closed eyes and deadly pallor disconcerted Kerim, who, with widely-opened eyes, contemplated his victim in doubt if she were not already dead. A slight trembling of the eyelids and a convulsive motion about the lips, relieved him of this fear. With the utmost care he placed her on a divan, and pouring into her white lips some of the sherbet contained in the goblet, anxiously watched the efforts which Nature made to revive her. As she heaved a deep sigh, she opened her eyes, then closed them again with a shrill cry at the sight of the black visage of Kerim bent over her.

"Listen," he says again, in a much gentler voice. He understood that excessive fear or a too great repugnance would be fatal, therefore he curbed his passion.

"If you will consent to be my Sultana, Pelayo shall be my second in the kingdom of the Asturias. If not"—and, spite of himself, such a look of ferocity came over his face that Onesinda shrank from him with inexpressible disgust—"the blood of every knight I have taken shall water the earth of Gijon, specially that of Pelayo, who shall expire in unknown torments. Choose, Christian, between life with me, or certain ruin to your race."

As he awaited her answer, Kerim seats himself by her side. With a smile on his dark face he strove to take her hand. In this gentler mood, he

seemed to Onesinda a thousand times more loathsome than in his fiercest moments.

One glance was enough. Gathering her robes about her, she darts to the farthest extremity of the vast hall.

"Moor," she cries, and the horror she felt was expressed in her features, "for me death has no terrors. For my brother, I do not believe you. Can the eagle nest with the vulture? the dove with the serpent? It is but a cruel wile to deceive me."

"I swear it, lady, by the tomb of the Prophet. Think well before you take your own life and that of those who are dear to you." He paused, and the unhappy Onesinda felt all the agony of her position. To allow this hideous African to approach her was to her a fate so horrible that flesh and blood rose up in revolt against it. To open the possible chance of success to Pelayo and his followers by the sacrifice of herself is, as a daughter of the Goths, her duty, did she believe his words to be sincere.

Looking into his dark face, what assurance had she? In his cruel eyes? In those full red lips, cutting like blood athwart the blackness of his beard? It is the countenance of a savage. Not a generous quality could dwell under such a mask. No, there is nothing in the hard nature of this African on which to form a hope! And yet her brother's life, if he speaks truly, hangs on his will. She had no means to prove his words. Pelayo is absent, some said already dead. Was this dark treachery towards his Sultan true? Or rather is it not some fiendish scheme to entrap the last

remnant of the Goths and raise himself to power and favour with Abdurraman?

Bursting into a flood of tears, she casts herself upon the ground and fixes on him her pale blue eyes.

"Alas! you know not the heart of woman to make such a proposal. To invoke your pity," and her voice trembles, "would be as useless as it is mean. Help the noble sons of the land, but insist not on such a sacrifice. By the memory of your father, by the bones of your chiefs, seek not an end so wicked."

Unmoved, Kerim contemplates her, a smile of triumph on his dark face.

"It is your turn now to supplicate, proud Infanta, mine to deny. Either you comply, or every Moslem soldier in the citadel of Gijon shall hunt the Goths in the length and breadth of the Asturias like vermin. Reflect ere you decide. I swear by the Holy Caalaba I speak truth."

With a menacing gesture he departs, leaving Onesinda prostrate on the ground and the Moorish slaves return to bear her into the dark grove where the harem stood fronting the ever-beating sea that washes the iron-bound coast which girds the north of Spain.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAGIC DEATH OF ONESINDA.

THE Plaza of Gijon swarms with a motley crowd. The news of some great event to take place had spread abroad and brought down peasants from the distant mountain-tops, clad in primitive coverings of skins, and the thick-set natives of Gallicia from their groves of wide-branching oaks and thick copse wood, too often stained with blood in the fierce encounters between Moslem and Christian.

Townsmen there are, in coarse hempen garments, and artificers from the lowly dwellings of Gijon, mixed with mounted groups of naked Nubians, as black as night; Bedouins carrying long lances and wattled shields; Berbers and Kurds on foot among the crowd, casting looks of defiance on the sons of the soil, easily recognized by the fairness of their faces and long auburn hair, grouped about native musicians singing wild melodies to the click of the castanets; Moorish knights in the light armour which contrasts so favourably with the heavy accoutrements of the West—an indistinguishable rabble of the conquered and the conquerors, remarkable for

nothing but the contentious and sullen spirit in which the Moslem ousts the Christian at all points.

In the centre of the plaza rises a gaudy pavilion formed of sheets of the brightest silk, scarlet, yellow, blue and orange, the tent-poles and pillars glittering with tiny flags, before which the astounding clamour of bands of Eastern musicians raise martial echoes. Within, visible through the partially withdrawn curtains, a throne is placed with such magnificence as the limited means permit.

Planted in front the standard of Kerim floats heavily in the breeze, this Arab of the desert pretending to no distinction but the star and the crescent, the emblems of his faith. Horsemen and foot soldiers are ranged on either side, and banners and pennons are displayed by each Moorish knight or captain before his own tent, dazzling with the flash of splendid accoutrements and gorgeous display of brocade and tossing plumes, fluttering to the sound of drums, trumpets and shrill-voiced pipes, recalling to the Arabs the deserts of their home.

A mass of dismounted cavalry is stationed before the pavilion on which all eyes are turned, each Moslem erect by the side of his gaily-draped charger, until, at a shrill cry, surmounting even the din of the music, each man vaults into the saddle and spurs forward towards a cloud of dust announcing the arrival of Kerim surrounded by his Ethiopian body guard.

At full gallop they approach, bristling with spears and brandishing their scimitars, disposing themselves in a semicircle which leaves Kerim alone,

so resplendent with steel, feathers, and gems that, as the sun shines down upon him, he looks like a statue of light.

The grim forms and wild faces of the Africans, tossing their arms in every direction with savage shouts, reining up their horses but a hair's breadth from the edge of the crowd of spectators—who, uttering piercing screams, rush backwards upon those behind, who in their turn lift up their voices in screams of utmost terror—created such a scene of noise and confusion that a white silk litter borne by slaves, round whose arms and legs are bound rich bangles and bracelets, followed by a crowd of veiled women in snowy garments, is scarcely noticed.

Yet a group of dark-robed Goths have marked it, and the sadness of their faces and their looks of shame and sorrow show how abhorrent to them is this Eastern pageant and its cause. For who has not guessed the occasion of these rejoicings? Onesinda, for the sake of her people, has consented to become the bride of Kerim.

Nor was she and her countrymen around her, to whom, through the light lattice of the litter, she is plainly visible, without hope that Pelayo, if yet alive, may have planned a rescue. But in the face of such an array of forces, called out purposely by Kerim, it would be a mad and senseless sacrifice of life.

The agony of mind of Onesinda is not to be described. Did he indeed appear, what would Pelayo think of her? Would he understand the amount of the sacrifice? To become a vile and nameless thing? To submit to this crowning outrage of

the Moor, with no power to whisper into his ear the sacredness of her motive?

Alas! poor Onesinda, she is of too gentle a nature to battle with such a fate! So colourless has she become, her face is scarcely visible among the silken cushions of the litter as she breathlessly scans the assembled crowd.

A wild hope seizes her. May not Alonzo or Friula, if Pelayo is away, be present? Some valiant ally or devoted follower still faithful to her? Some pitying Goth with a soul for her distress? At least one by his look to remind her that he is there?

Nothing! She sees the threatening faces of the Moors, she hears their muttered curses, she beholds their contemptuous gestures as they point at her. Do they believe she is a willing victim?

And now Kerim has dismounted from his charger; a tall white turban is set upon his head, crowned with a spiral diadem, in which a ruby crescent blazes, surrounded by drops of pearls; a white robe, sown with jewels, clothes his limbs, held up by a golden sash worked with gems, in which the blade of a small dagger rests, incrusted with precious stones, of so fine a temper one touch is sufficient to cut the thread of life.

Followed by his guards, he follows the litter towards the pavilion, surrounded by a phalanx of sheikhs and alcades. And as he approaches the litter the drapery is drawn aside, the clash of discordant music strikes up, and the voice of the Imaum chants *Allah Akbar*.

The moment is come; Onesinda must descend.

A look of mingled triumph and love lights up Kerim's swarthy face and brings out the whiteness of his eyes into a revolting prominence. Already his naked arms, glittering with bracelets, are stretched out to clasp his bride, already the soft aroma of her presence comes wafting to his senses like spicy perfumes of paradise, when, by a deft and sudden movement, breaking from the strong arms which bear her up, Onesinda seizes the dagger which lies beneath his sash and with desperate courage plunges it in her breast.

With frantic haste Kerim tears it from the wound, but her life blood follows it. Clasping her in his arms, he gazes on her face. Has death come to her instantly? Her eyes are closed, yet a faint flush is still upon her cheek. Then the lids slowly rise, but the orbs are fixed and glazed. Gradually the flush vanishes and gives place to the pallid hue of death!

Ere the poor remains of the Gothic maiden can be borne away, a great clattering of horses' feet is heard advancing; a Moslem herald gallops forward, followed by trumpeters and men-at-arms, and several knights, who ride into the plaza. After a flourish of trumpets and due recital and summoning of Kerim, Governor of Gijon, to listen, he is commanded, in the name of the redoubtable Sultan Abdurraman, to appear without delay at Cordoba, together with his Christian captive, Onesinda, sister of the royal Goth, known as Pelayo, Dux of Cantabria.

CHAPTER XV.

PELAYO PROCLAIMED KING BY THE GOTHS.

To those who have not visited the north of Spain, the grandeur of the dark chain of the Asturian mountains rising sheer out of the plains of Leon and Lugo, can hardly be imagined. The change is so abrupt, the aspect so dark and threatening of frowning defiles, deeply-scored precipices, and pointed summits heavy with mist. Here winter lingers into latest spring and the tardy summer soon retreats before the grey and deathlike hue which clothes the rocks and narrows inch by inch with the green mantle which sunshine brings.

This is the true Iberia, the cradle of the race, the title borne by the eldest born of Spain, the stronghold which has held out last against all conquerors. The Romans left their mark at Gijon; in the south the Moors stamped the soil with their lineaments; in the east, Catalonia formed a separate kingdom, with laws and customs; Navarre, with its ancient line of kings, raised Alpine barriers. But the mountain crests are free, and those deep cavernous recesses which cut the rocks resound only to the shrill cry of the eagle or the bleat of the wild deer.

Full in the front of a stupendous face of rock, facing east, the mouth of a deep cave opens; the narrow track which leads to it ends here, Nature herself forbids further progress. Piles, avalanches rather, of black boulders, the spittle and waste of mountains shaken by earthquakes in bygone ages, have fallen from above, and, smoothed by time to dull surfaces of greys and greens, guard its opening, shrouded by a feathery veil of thorn, ivy, and wild trailing plants which love the shade.

From within the cave a transparent rivulet murmurs forth in a bed of coloured pebbles to meet the sun and join its feeble ripple to the louder sound of other waters flowing from the gorge above.

In front the grass spreads soft and verdant; cups of the early crocuses peep out, lilac and white, and dark purple violets nestle under dry leaves, filling the air with fragrance. A few scraggy beech trees turn their white trunks outwards, the roots deeply imbedded in the rocks, and clumps of low firs and juniper follow the almost imperceptible track which leads onwards to remoter glens.

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Slowly mounting from below, a little band of Goths, clad in the homespun jerkins which distinguish them at once from their guadily attired conquerers, ascend the path, stepping from rock to rock. The dry leaves of winter rustle beneath their feet as they pass up under the gnarled boughs of scraggy oaks.

Carefully the foremost ones plant their steps upon the stones, as they bear upon a crossed frame the body of Onesinda, which the Christians of

Gijon had secured in the confusion following her death and the arrival of the herald summoning Kerim to Cordoba.

A dark pall covers her, and so slight and fragile is her form that the outline of her figure scarcely raises the folds.

Behind appears the stalwart figure of Pelayo, wearing the Gothic cap of steel and armed with the simple accoutrements of a Dacian warrior.

Not a tear moistens his eye. His face is set and white, marked by the vicissitudes and hardships of his life; a countenance on which Nature has set her seal as a leader of men—the sole remaining link of the early Gothic kings.

Behind him follow three other chiefs, who have joined in an eternal hatred to the Moor, Friula, Teudis, and Recesvinto.

A sorrowful procession, fitly set in the impenetrable wilds which surround them, solemn as themselves, who want no spur to their resolve to sell their blood dear in the cause of their country. But if they did, surely the slight form they are bearing, so cruelly sacrificed to the Moor, is enough to stir up their souls to never-ending vengeance.

Silently the bearers rest the bier upon the green platform of grass before the cave.

Then Pelayo advances to the front, and putting back with his hands the thickly trailing thorns that impede the opening, the bier is placed within under the shadows of an overlapping stone.

Not a word has been spoken, but the murmur of many streams go bubbling to the sun, the splash of distant waterfalls answer, and the sighing of the

wind passes with hollow sound. Only the shrill cry of an eagle catches the ear as it swoops upon its prey, unconscious of the presence of man.

By a common instinct the Gothic chiefs gather before the cave, the lofty figure of Pelayo towering above them all. These men represent a nation conquered, fugitive, helpless, but still a nation which will never die, but live to bring forth long lines of kings in succeeding centuries to rule over two hemispheres.

They know it, these Gothic chiefs, the prophecy is in them—a solemn faith in the justice of their cause, which tells them the hordes of unbelievers shall not prevail.

And as they wait, by other paths, invisible to the eye but known to the fugitives, emerge the dark forms of other brothers in arms, who now join the group.

Every eye seeks Pelayo, by whose invincible courage, wisdom, and endurance this small remnant has been saved. Every eye seeks his as he stands aside leaning against a rock, insensible, as it seems, to all but his own affliction.

Then Friula, nearest in kinship to the royal line, speaks,—

"The time is come, brothers, that we must choose a chief. Long has the noble Pelayo led us. He has now another vengeance to fulfil. The moment is opportune. Onesinda is dead. The butcher Kerim has been summoned to Cordoba. The garrison of Gijon lacks a defender. Let him lead us there as king."

"As king," comes ringing from every side of

the shrouded summits, invisible to mortal eye, but yet as conscious, catches the words, and bears them from hollow depths, spanless to vision, to savage gorges yawning out among black cliffs, down which green waters pour from within the gloomy precincts of the cave where rests all that is left of Onesinda.

"Let him be king!" sounds in many tones like a chant of freedom, intoned by these Asturian wilds, which never had felt the foot of mortal foe.

As the voices die away amid a thousand echoes, Pelayo turns and raises his steel helmet, showing the careworn lines of his deeply wrinkled face lit up by no gleam of triumph. Ere he speaks he raises his hand, and points to the deep shadow of the cave.

"We are in the presence of the dead. The shade of Onesinda yet lingers in that body she died to save. Before her corpse, speak softly. Let the dead rest in peace."

"Then in her presence let us crown him!" cries Friula, taking up the word. "For her sake let the vengeance of the Goths not tarry."

"We are but as a handful against a nation," says Recesvinto, "numberless as the sand of the desert; but we will fight for Pelayo and for Spain."

"For Pelayo and for Spain!" again thunders round. Even the tiny streamlet which cleaves the grass they stand on seems to snatch the words and goes dancing downwards, bearing them to the world.

"My friends and brothers," cries Pelayo, rousing himself from the cloud of sorrow in which the death of his sister has plunged him, "I accept your trust. We have been together in many a hard-

fought day since the rout of the Guadalete sent us to these wilds. It is no crown I crave, even were it the glorious iron circlet which bound the brows of Alaric, but to lead you in danger and in toil. For this I will be your king. God willing, I will cut off the Moors to the depth of my hatred, root and branch. They shall learn to curse the day when Pelayo was proclaimed. At the cave of Cavadonga a new nation commences, which, with God's help, shall exceed the old. In the name of Onesinda we will triumph."

A burst of joyful enthusiasm follows this address. He spoke with a dignity and confidence which inspires his followers with the reckless courage he feels within his breast.

The Gothic chiefs gather round him as the sheep round the faithful shepherd when the bray of the wolf is borne upon the wind. No lack of valour is visible upon their dark brows, and looks of deadly defiance shoot from eye to eye as they hasten to bind the shields they carry together, place Pelayo on them, and bear him three times round the face of the cave of Cavadonga, the rest following with bare heads and naked swords.

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The Moslems of Gijon, when they heard that the fugitive Goths had elected a king in the Asturian mountains, laughed with scorn. But he soon made his presence felt by frequent incursions, causing great havoc among the Moors.

At length he collected a sufficient force to meet them in a pitched battle. The great victory of Caincas followed, and ere the eighteen years were

passed during which Pelayo ruled over the Goths, the garrison of Gijon surrendered, and El Conde de Gijon was one of the titles he bore upon his shield.

In the solitude of the Asturias the Cave of Cavadonga still is to be found; the very spot or *campo* before it on which Pelayo was carried on the shields of his followers, is somewhat vulgarized by a commemorative obelisk erected by the Duc de Montpensier. The valley, a perfect *cul de sac*, ascends abruptly to the site. Pelayo lies within the small church of Saint Eulalia, near at hand at Abaima. A simple stone is engraved with his name and a carved sword of Roman pattern.

It was he who dealt the first serious blow to the invaders. From that time they grew cautious in their approaches to the north.

Again the Goths became a name in the old kingdom. At Oviedo, south of Gijon, the new dynasty took root, concealed at first in the obscure reigns of Friula, Orelio, Ramiro, and Ordoño, calling themselves Kings of Gallicia and Oviedo, up to Alonso the Second, surnamed "the Chaste," 791, when Leon came to be both the court and capital of the kingdom of the Goths.

CHAPTER XVI.

BERNARDO DEL CARPIO.

THE city of Leon is a very ancient place, old even in the days of the Romans. Around it circles the line of walls spared by Witica when he levelled the defences throughout Spain.

It is entered by four gates opening into four wide streets, crossing each other at right angles. Many have been the changes, but there still stand the city walls, substantially the same, the huge stones worked into coarse rubble, capped by frequent towers with *tapia* turrets from which the eye ranges over the leafy plains of mountain-bound Gallicia.

The houses are low-roofed and homely, as befits the rough climate of the north ; the streets narrow and grey. Red-brown and sepia is the colouring against the sky, with whiffs of chill air from the mountains and the scent of fields and flowers, the shelter of green thickets and verdant banks, sown with tall poplars, beside purling streams.

A homelike and pleasant place, despised by the Moors after the African fantasies of the south, but absolute luxury to the Spaniards, as so much larger and nobler than their late capital, Oviedo.

Alonso, surnamed "the Chaste," second of that name, passing to the conclusion of a long and prosperous reign, finds much that is congenial to his monkish prejudices and austere life in the simplicity of the nature around.

That Alonso's habits are more of a friar than of a king may be explained by the aspect of the times. As successor to the pious "*Il Diacono*," and as a protest against Mauregato, his kinsman, who, for the assistance given him by the Moors, agreed to pay them what is often mentioned in history as the "Maiden Tribute," a hundred Christian maidens to be sent to the Caliph at Cordoba for his harem, fifty rich and fifty poor, a shameful agreement faithfully fulfilled until the reign of Ramiro in 866.

This specially developed in Alonso a sentiment of religious protest in the form of a rigid chastity, not only enforced in his own person, but in all those about him. As he grew older these ideas take more and more hold upon him, and increased to such a degree as actually to pervert his judgment. Obviously it is the interest of the Church to encourage them, and for this reason he seeks his companions among priests and monks.

What care his subjects that Alonso is called "the Chaste," or that his wife, Queen Berta, lives like a nun? The royal claims to sanctity are utterly thrown away upon a sarcastic, laughter-loving court, specially as Doña Ximena, his sister, a buxom dame, with the fair amplitude of her Gothic ancestors, has so far strayed from the fold as to become the mother of a boy!

Imagine the scandal! She is promptly ordered

off to a cloister for life, and her lover, the heroic Conde de Saldaña, imprisoned in the castle of Luna, where, *more gothicum*, he is deprived of sight; Alonso himself fasting and scourging himself until nature well-nigh gives way, and Berta, the Queen, bathed in tears, doing nothing but confess, although she had nothing to say except that she has lived in company with such a sinner as Ximena!

But the boy throve apace, a very lusty and proper child, with no notion of dying or care as to who were his parents, provided he had enough to eat and playmates to amuse him, horses to ride and dogs to follow him about the court, where, with singular inconsistency, Alonso allows him to remain and bear the name of Bernardo del Carpio.

Not that he is acknowledged by the king—heaven forfend! Though one of those secrets known to everyone, Bernardo himself was never told how he came into the world, but accepted himself in ignorance as one standing alone, not in arrogance and pride, but out of the simplicity of his heart, which prompted him to be second to none, seeing that he had already given good proofs of his valour in tilts and tourneys and in continual encounters with the Moors, pressing hard on the little Christian kingdom, so narrow against the sea.

. . . . . .

It is a gusty morning in the month of June; a mass of black clouds rides up from the west, portending a coming storm. Distant thunder rumbles between snatches of fitful sunshine, lighting up the

inner court of the royal palace where the Roman prefects had ruled—a plain edifice, built of stone, with open arcades running round supported by pillasters of coarsely grained marble.

In and out there is an air of unusual bustle and movement. Sturdy Goths were hurrying to and fro, their long, unkempt hair hanging on their shoulders, and others of a slighter mould in outlandish draperies and white turbans, whose finer features betray an Eastern origin; for, as was often the case, African captives in battle gladly accepted, as slaves, the more peaceful service of the Christians, when no necessity was imposed on them of fighting their Moslem brethren.

In the countenances of all there is a look of surprise as they hurry by, carrying such golden utensils as served for the celebration of the Mass, jewelled cups, golden patens, embroidered cushions, and rich folds of arras and tapestry worked in Algerian looms, with which the chapel walls are decorated on high occasions of state.

A master of the ceremonies, or Jefé, bearing an ivory wand, stands in the centre of the court directing the servants. His flat Castillian cap of a bright colour, and dark manto lined with fur, sharp aquiline features and piercing eyes proclaiming him a native-born Spaniard of the old type.

"Is it that foreign palmer?" he mutters between his teeth, "arrived from Navarre, or that Gallic knight who flies the fleur-de-lis with such heavy armour and delicate forms of speech? I warrant me he is a hypocrite to the core, as he comes from the Frankish king. One or both, they have be-

witched our master. The palmer, with his sandalled feet and cockle-shell, an ill-favoured fellow one scents a mile off, dirt being, I am told, a quality next to holiness—but I like it not, the odour of garlic is strong enough for me—is shut up with my lord in his private closet. Anyway, the king has encountered the foul fiend somewhere, that he is tempted to risk his crown. Now they have been singing a *laudamus* in the chapel for the safe arrival of the French king, whom the devil confound as a stranger and an invader! Well-a-day! The Holy Virgin of Saragoya help us! We can die but once! Here, Poilo, Poilo!" he shouts at the top of his voice, to a rough, wolfish-looking dog which had precipitated itself with an angry growl and clenched teeth into the arcade.

"Fie upon you for an ill-mannered brute. Leave the king's guests alone."

Doffing his scarlet cap, the Jefé at once assumed the humble aspect of his condition, as two personages, evidently of importance, emerge from the arcade, taking no notice of his repeated low salutations nor of the snarls of the dog which he now held by a silver collar, as they walk up and down the court in eager conversation.

"Was the like ever heard?" exclaims one of them, a tall figure of martial aspect, attired in a rich robe trimmed at neck and shoulder with minever, and secured on the breast with a huge gold brooch.

"Let Alonso forfeit his crown if he please," is the answer, "but I will never consent to cut my own throat."

"Nor I, Favila," replies the other, a younger man, who held the office of Chamberlain, wearing a heavy gold chain about his neck, his slight figure set off by a coquettishness in the fashion of the time—a close-fitting tunic of dark green, with a hood attached reaching to his waist, and a plume fixed by a jewel in a small cap poised on one ear.

"I for one, will stoutly defend my castle and shake off all allegiance to Alonso. I would rather join the Moors, treacherous as they are and ready to pounce on us at every corner, than submit to an inroad of new enemies to overrun the land we have rescued with so much blood. Bad enough to have Charlemagne for a neighbour, without bringing him here to rule over us with the king's leave. They say he and his paladins are already on the march. Why cannot the king be content to name his sister's son his successor? Whom will he find better than the son of Saldaña and a royal infanta? I love Bernardo with all my heart."

"That Alonso will never do," rejoins the older man, "in face of his obstinate refusal to admit the legality of the marriage of Doña Ximena to the Count of Saldaña. They say he has destroyed the documents, and that Bernardo can never prove himself his father's son."

"He has no notion of trying," answers Don Ricardo, "as far as I can see. He is strangely indifferent to name and position."

"But is the reason known of the king's strange perversity?" asked Don Favila.

"In part it is. First there is this maggot in his head of chastity."

"He will not find that virtue among the Gallic monks he is so fond of harbouring," Don Favila observed, twirling his black moustache. "Of all the hoary sinners—"

"No matter," interrupts Don Ricardo, "that is not to the point. You question me of the reason —if he has any tangible one and is not mad—that Alonso treats Bernardo as he does. Chastity in the first place. The propagation of his royal race offends him. He glories in the name of 'the Chaste.' He would have all his family the same."

"Fool," mutters Don Favila, but he offers no further interruption.

"Doña Ximena, his only sister, was destined to become the Abbess of the great Convent of San Marcos, outside the gate of Leon, which he is building. So averse to love is he himself—"

"Then why in the foul fiend's name did he marry Queen Berta?" puts in the younger man, evidently of an impatient temperament, but Don Ricardo passes the question by as irrelevant and proceeds,—

"When he found that the Infanta preferred a mortal to an immortal spouse, and had actually gone the length of bearing him a child, he fell into such a state of blind rage that he declared she had never married, and shut her up with such rigour that she died."

"By Santiago, a most barbarous act," is the response; "but saints are always cruel."

"About as barbarous," answers Don Ricardo, "as calling in a foreigner to inherit the Gothic throne,

Charlemagne, a Frank, to whom he offers the succession, when his own sister's child is beside him branded with infamy."

"If this is the Church's teaching, I would fain be a Mussulman. What will Bernardo say when he hears of it?"

"Who speaks of me?" cries a clear young voice, coming from a more distant part of the *patio* where an arched gateway led out into the place of arms in which the Spanish knights and soldiers exercised themselves. A knight's chain and spurs of gold shows out from under a manto of dark velvet, which he threw on the ground, and was instantly, with every sign of reverence, picked up by the Jefé, with difficulty holding Poilo back, who with sharp, quick barks and yells of delight seeks to precipitate itself on the young knight, much too pre-occupied to observe it, save that with a quick wave of the hand he dismisses both the dog and the Jefé.

Bernardo's somewhat short and sturdy figure is clothed in linked mail which rattles as he hastens forward to join Favila and Ricardo, at the moment that a louder and nearer clap of thunder is audible and a deeper shadow fell.

"Favila, Ricardo, you have heard this cursed news? I see it in your faces. By the blood of St. Isidore, is the king distraught that he disposes of the kingdom of Leon as though he were a churl chaffering away his field? Can it be true? I am just come from the mountains, where I have met with sport both of men and beasts, for the Moor Kirza has planted himself at Selagon, and sends out

detachments to the foot of the Asturias. Tell me, friends, can it be true?"

Both bow their heads.

"We will never submit," said Favila, "to the Frankish king. Many are already gone from the Court to place their castles in a state of defence."

"What!" exclaims Bernardo, whose cheeks are flushing scarlet and the veins in his forehead swelling with growing passion. "What! give away the whole kingdom of Leon, with its warriors and nobles, to a foreigner, as if we were a flock of sheep? I am of no illustrious race myself"—at these words a significant look passes between his two companions, who turn their eyes on the ground. "Faith! I know not of what race I am," with a short laugh, "nor do I care while the king continues his favour to me, but I am a Spaniard; I will sell my living to no man."

"The king has no heir," observes Favila, in a dry tone, raising curious eyes on Bernardo. "He says he desires to settle the succession before his death."

"True," answers Ricardo, "no *legal* heir," and he, in his turn, shot a significant glance at Bernardo, who does not in the least observe it. "He may fear that some one of his blood might take his place that he would not approve."

"Sir, you speak in riddles," cries Bernardo, cutting in. "Who is there that the king fears will step into his place? Marry for me I know not, nor do I care. Confusion to his surname of 'the Chaste,' if Alonso brings in Charlemagne and his

paladins into the hard-won land that the noble Pelayo wrested from the Moor. By the memory of the cave of Cavadonga and the sacred oath our ancestors swore among the savage rocks of the Asturias" (at these words, Bernardo raises his steel cap from his head, and stood with open brow and glistening eyes full in the glory of the fitful sunshine), "I pledge myself never to sheathe my unworthy sword until every invader, be he enemy or friend, Frank, Berber, or Moor, be driven out of the limits of Leon. I swear it," he adds in a deep tone, laying his right hand on his breast, where, on a laced front of velvet, was embroidered the cognizance he had received from the king. "You are witnesses, my friends?" At which Don Favila and Don Ricardo incline their heads, and Bernardo replaces the helmet on his head from which floated a sombre plume, then adding, with a light laugh, "Let Alonzo play the anchorite if he will, but all of us are not blest with his virtues."

"Mock not, profane youth, the saintly name of our master. There is no danger that *your* virtues will reach the height of *his* excellency. His pure soul lives more in heaven than on earth," says the voice of an older man, an ancient Jefé much honoured by the king, advancing to join the group, which had moved in the energy of talk, higher up towards the stone border of a fountain which rose from the base of a Roman statue overgrown with moss and weeds.

"Your challenge, Bernardo, comes too late. Charlemagne is already near the Pyrenees, with

all his knights and vassals, the renowned Roland among them; they will soon touch the soil of Leon, to accept the inheritance our gracious king has given him. Once arrived in Leon, you dare not, presumptuous boy, who judge your betters by yourself, draw your sword upon the guest of Alonso."

"He shall never be his guest," shouts Bernardo, fire flashing from his eyes; "neither Charlemagne nor his peers, his knights or paladins, Roland and the rest shall set their feet in Leon. I, Bernardo del Carpio, will bar the way." A laugh of derision comes from the old chamberlain, at what he considers such madness. Even Favila and Ricardo smile, so vain it seems that this youth could stay the advance of the greatest monarch in Christendom.

"You laugh!" cries Bernardo, turning fiercely round, his glittering eyes aglow. "You deem I boast? Be it so. Time will show. I speak not of Divine help, Santiago on his milk white charger armed cap-a-pied in radiant steel interposing, or other monkish tales. If deeds are the language of the brave, words lie with fools. Was it with words Pelayo revenged his sister's death and raised the Gothic standard against the great Abdurraman? Excuse me, good sir," he adds, breaking off suddenly, the inspired look passing from his countenance as he addresses the older man, whose sarcastic countenance is still shapened to a sneer—"If I who am so young, speak my mind. I go to the king to remonstrate."

"You would do better to forbear," hastily in-

terrupts the old courtier. "The king is at his devotions, assisted by a learned monk lately arrived from Navarre."

"I care not, though the air breed monks as thick as flies; you stay me not, Sir Chamberlain."

CHAPTER XVII.

KING ALONSO.

BERNARDO hastily passed the court with swift, straight strides, his form in shadow defined against the light. A heavy peal of thunder sounded overhead as he turned to the right, where a marble stair, with a sculptured balustrade, guarded by soldiers, led to the royal apartments on the first floor, under a flat roof.

"'Tis indeèd a foul shame," said Don Favila, looking after him, as he and his companions took shelter under the arcade from the now thickly falling rain, "that our king, who loves him well, does not grant him the honours of his birth and name him his successor. He guesses not who he is. You noted his words?" turning to Ricardo, who nodded.

"What! a bastard!" exclaimed the aged Chamberlain, "a braggart and a bastard, instead of the victorious Charlemagne? Good gentlemen, you are distraught. Would you have a sovereign, the pureness of whose life will pass as an example in all time, forget so far his principles as to countenance his sister's shame? The king, my master, has

done rightly to protect his kingdom from such reproach."

Meanwhile Bernardo, passing the Alguazils who knew him well, his mailed feet resounding on the marble floor as step by step he reached a door before which a heavy panel of tapestry is displayed, bearing a royal crown, and beneath the arms of Leon and Oviedo, bound by an inscription in old Gothic letters.

The first chamber, lined with wooden wainscot and a groined oaken roof, is bare of other furniture, save some rudely carved benches, on which meanly attired attendants sit or lounge.

These Bernardo passes with a hasty salute, which they respectfully return, then on into another and another chamber floored with coloured Moorish tiles, into the last, a hugely proportioned hall, the carved roof supported by lofty pillars. This hall, through the window of which the lightning plays, though void of furniture, is far more ornate than the rest, seeing that at the farther end, on a raised platform, surmounted by a dusty canopy, is a throne, on which a royal chair is placed, used on such rare occasions as when Alonso receives his *compañeros* and knights in state.

Nothing can exceed the neglect of this primitive apartment, now seen in the deep shadow of the coming storm. Trophies of early Gothic armour are fixed on hangings of once embroidered damask; but so little care has been taken that the nails had given way, the tapestry had fallen, and the mortar which knit together the solid blocks of stone is visible.

Before the throne stood a long wooden table, on which rested a rich enamelled crucifix, set with jewels, and huge candelabras of silver, holding waxen torches such as are used in churches to light up the shrines of saints, a rude attempt at splendour which left the rest more bare. Seats there are with time-stained leather coverings, and a royal chair inlaid with ivory, as was also the curiously formed footstool. Two low doors open in a recess behind the throne into two opposite turrets, one leading to the private apartments of the king, who lives alone, Queen Berta being relegated to a distant part of the palace, which formed three sides of a square, fronting the cathedral, where a delicate array of carved saints and martyrs niched round the deep curves of three arched portals under two turreted towers, the other door opening into a small chapel, where Alonso, kneeling on the bare stones, passed great part of the day and often deep into the night, in ecstatic prayer and meditation.

Not for a moment did Bernardo hesitate. Knocking on the oaken panels interspersed with heavy nails which opened to the chapel, the latch yielded to his hand, and he entered as a blinding flash of lightning gleamed bright and strong and the thunder broke loudly overhead. An instant after all had darkened into so profound a gloom that at first nothing was visible, except the dim outline of a gilt *retablo* behind the altar, on which a light burnt day and night before the ever-present host and such sacred bones and relics as had been saved from desecration by the Moors.

"Who dares to break in on my devotions?"

cried a harsh voice, speaking as it were from the depths of sudden night before a shrine concealed in the sunken curvings of the wall. "Begone! leave me to commune with the saints."

"It is in their name I come, O King, to defend the land they love," answered Bernardo, bending his knee, in a voice so young and fresh, life and youth seemed to waft with it into the gloom.

There was a moment of silence.

"Not now, Bernardo, not now, my boy. Leave me. I have vowed a *novena* to the Virgin of Saragoza, whose favour I specially implore, with that of the Holy Santiago and Sant Isidore our patrons, on a great project I have in hand. Not now."

"Yes, *now*," in a stern voice came from Bernardo, fronting the king, who had turned reluctantly towards him. "What I have to say brooks not a moment's delay." Another crash from without interrupts him, and a wild whirl of hail and rain rattle outside on the casement. "Oh, my lord," he continues, "are there no valiant knights in Leon that you should betray your kingdom into the hands of a strange king?"

"Betray? you dare to say *betray*, after the long and prosperous reign heaven has vouchsafed me?" cries Alonso, rising up from where he was kneeling as a subdued ray of light lit the sunken features of his emaciated face, with long white hair and beard, the natural fairness of his skin turned by time into a yellow tinge; his eyes full and grey, with thin imperceptible eyebrows, and cheeks deeply lined with wrinkles which collected on his high forehead under a silken cap. A noble face, once full of

manly beauty, but with an expression of coldness and fickleness in the wandering eye, and weakness in the thin-lined mouth which marred it. Then in a louder tone he continues, "It ill becomes your slender years, Bernardo, and your lack of experience, to question the wisdom of your sovereign."

"But to sell us to a foreigner, my lord, to give us over into the hands of the Frankish wolf! This can never be. A courage equal to Charlemagne's beats in a thousand Spanish breasts, and I, Bernardo, will lead them. Not secretly and treacherously, but in the light of day. Therefore I am come to warn you against yourself. For by no unbiassed will of your own have you done this thing."

"Silence, rash boy," answers Alonso, roused into unwonted passion by these stinging words, "you presume upon my constant favour to insult me."

"Never, oh, never! All that I know of kindness is from you," and Bernardo casts himself at Alonso's feet and seizes upon his hands. "You are my king and master. I forget none of your bounties to a friendless boy" (at this word Alonso starts, and lays his hand tenderly on Bernardo's head, but presently withdraws it with a sigh); "but neither the crown you wear nor your bounties, had they been ten times greater, would make me a traitor to the land."

CHAPTER XVIII.

BERNARDO DEL CARPIO'S VOW.

As Bernardo knelt upon the steps of the darkened altar, on which the outline of a saint with a dim glory seemed to bless him with outstretched arms, something in the ardent auburn of his hair, relieved from the pressure of his cap of steel, which he had removed before entering, his open manly brow and honest eyes fixed on him with such pleading warmth, touched some subtle chord of tenderness within the King.

His sister Ximena in her youth rose up and gazed at him in Bernardo's eyes. Deep down in his cold heart a thrill of human affection throbbed as he recalled their games as children and a thousand ties of girlish love she had woven about his heart. Alas! how he had loved her! How he still mourned her, and importuned Heaven with constant prayers, spite of what he considered the deadly sin of her apostasy in forming an adulterous union which shut out her son from the legal pale of kinship! Therefore he had destroyed all record of the marriage, ever, in the consideration of the Church, a sacrilegious act.

That the son of his sister should inherit the

crown had ever been to him a horror and a dread. Indeed, in the ramifications of his strangely mixed nature, this fear had mainly influenced him in the choice he had made of Charlemagne.

Now, by a sudden revulsion of feeling, the very boldness of Bernardo, his open-handed valour and the fiery words in which he pleaded, invested him with something sacred as the utterance of the true and rightful defender of his people. From that moment a tardy remorse began to possess him, and doubts of the rightfulness of his act in destroying the proofs of his legitimacy.

"Too late, too late," he murmured, gazing sorrowfully into the depths of Bernardo's clear blue eyes, and unconsciously passing his fingers through the beads of an agate rosary suspended at his waist, as if to invoke the assistance of the saints to maintain the steadfastness of his resolve—then shook his head, which sank upon his breast.

All this time the war of the elements was raging without. Thunder, lightning, wind and rain had burst forth in one of those sudden tempests which sweep down from the mountains even in the midst of summer. The walls of the old palace seemed to rock, and at times the voices of the speakers were barely audible.

"My lord, you answer not," pleads Bernardo, rising to his feet, offended at the long silence, as a gleam of vivid lightning at the same moment swept over him. "Hark! The very powers of nature protest against your act. At least before you made us over as vassals to Charlemagne you might have called the Cortes together, and heard

what the nation had to say. But let me tell you, Don Alonso, you have made a promise you can never keep. Instead of the crown of Leon, Charlemagne will have to face a nation in arms. Every man that bears the name of Castillian will rise and water the soil with his blood rather than yield, and I, Bernardo del Carpio, will lead them!"

For an instant the fury within him overtopped all control, but he checked himself as Alonso answered,—

"Bernardo, Bernardo! Again I warn you not to overstep the respect you owe me. Your words are sharp, but there is a ring of truth in them, I admit. Bethink you, my boy," and Alonso's voice fell suddenly into a feeble tone, "Charlemagne is a Christian king, and a great warrior, whose power has always curbed the Moor. To exterminate the Moslem is the duty of sovereigns who love the Saints. Who is so strong as he? Wage no war on Christians, but keep your sword for the vile Infidels who press round the limits of our land."

"Christian or Moslem, my lord, Charlemagne shall never lead the knights of Leon," cries Bernardo. "But before I go"—(and again he bowed his knee before the king, who had now seated himself in an arched niche, a silver lamp suspended over his head among the rich details of garlands and shields, crowns and badges at moments visible in startling distinctness in the rapidly succeeding sheets of lightning)—"Tell me, I pray you, what name I bear, and from whom I am sprung? I crave it as a boon. Men call me Bernardo del Carpio, by the name of the castle you bestowed upon me.

When I question further they turn aside and smile. But a knight in such a battle as I go to lead against the Franks must wear his own escutcheon on his shield, not one granted him by favour."

Had a viper suddenly fixed its sharpest fangs upon his flesh Alonso could not have started with greater horror. His glassy eyes fixed themselves on the unconscious Bernardo, who eagerly awaited his answer to be gone, with an expression of mingled dread and terror, eyeing him as if the foul fiend himself had crossed his path, while a tremendous explosion of thunder overhead rattled around, and flash after flash of lightning quivered upon the walls. At length, out of his mouth came inarticulate words, mixed with broken phrases, but spoken so low in the uproar created by the storm no sense came to Bernardo.

"Begone, bastard!" cries the king at length, every feature in his face working with the violence of his passion. "Have I harboured you so many years to open the wound of my dishonour? Is this the return you make for all my care? Neither name nor kindred have you, so get you gone. The sight of you offends me."

"Oh, my lord!" answers Bernardo, whose open countenance had grown very white, deep lines forming on mouth and brow with a sudden look of age the course of years could not have wrought, "had any man but you spoken thus to me, he would not have lived to draw another breath. Your words point to some hideous secret, some foul crime, in which you share. Great God! whence am I sprung? The very beasts have dams that suckle them, and

is Bernardo alone deprived of the common claims of nature ?"

No answer came from the king; no sign, no yielding. Bernardo's question had struck him to the quick.

"As you pray for mercy, sire, speak one word," urges Bernardo, the trembling of his lips telling what he suffered. "Are father and mother dead ?"

"Both to me," is the stern answer. "The mortal spark of life can never re-animate the soul dead in sin. Question me no more, audacious youth. And think not, because my blood runs in your veins that I will favour your ambition. Rather have I called in the stranger to occupy the throne. Now you know my mind. Were I dead, my spirit would stand as with a flaming sword to shut you out."

"Then sweeter far than life and honour and glory, come death !" exclaims Bernardo, throwing up his arms. "From this day I am a desperate man. My sword is to me the staff of life ; bloodshed and carnage the food on which I live. Come now over the grey heights of the mountains the Frankish host and I will meet them as never mortal did his country's foes. Come, great Charlemagne and all your peers : iron-fisted Guarinos, good Ferragol, Oliver, Gayferos, and Roland, bravest of paladins. Come all. Despair, dishonour are the keen edges to the weapon which I draw for your destruction. An unknown knight, degraded from my place, I will leave a name behind me that shall be honoured as long as Spain cleaves the seas. Adieu, my lord," turning to the king, "you have forgotten your duty to the land you rule, come to you inch by inch, bathed in Gothic

blood. I, Bernardo del Carpio, the nameless outcast, go forth to defend it. You have planted a dagger in my heart not hecatombs of the enemy can draw forth. Adieu!"

"Now stay, my boy," cries the king, laying his hand on his shoulder as he turned to go. "Spite of the past, my heart warms to you. Take the lion of Leon and place it on your shield; and when men ask you by what right, answer, 'By order of the King.'"

At this moment the tempest seemed to have reached its climax; a loud and hollow reverberation, like the sound of a blow upon a brass timbrel, shook the palace to its foundations and the whole firmament pulsated with flame. But Bernardo heeded not: with his features locked in a cold, impassive silence, he passed out.

CHAPTER XIX.

BERNARDO LEADS THE GOTHS AGAINST CHARLEMAGNE.

THE day is warm and genial, the landscape flushed with green, and such homely blossoms as hawthorne and elder, briony and honeysuckle, flourish in the fields.

An immense plain spreads around, verdant with pastures, gardens and *huertas* full of fruit-trees and clumps of planes and oaks, while across it, flung like a silver ribbon, flows the current of the Torio river. Hayfields, ploughed land, and squares of maize and yellowing rye, follow each other in its course, divided by groves and wooded hedgerows rich in roadside flowers—Canterbury bells, pink willow-wand, the humble star daisy and the wild rose.

Behind rise the turrets and spires of Leon, ruddy in colour, on a gentle slope crowned by the cathedral, backed by a waving line of hills fading into the darkness of fantastic rocks, rising to the giddy heights of the Asturian mountains capped with snow.

Nor is the fairness of the earth less than the brilliancy of the sky. Not a cloud floats on the horizon to mar the view as, winding in and out among the trees, the dazzle of glittering helmets glimmers in the sun; sleek war-horses, cased in armour,

curveting gaily spite of the heavy weight laid on them; flags and emblazoned shields breaking through masses of bright lances held aloft, battle-axes and broadswords—each knight as he passes, followed by his esquire, trumpeter and page, riding forth on the sacred mission, led by Bernardo del Carpio.

As one man the city follows him as he rides forth from the gate on a white charger, the banner of Leon waving before him, a gold lion rampant on a field of red. "It is the standard of Leon," say those around. "The king allows him to bear it—a high honour to a nameless knight who, men say, never came legally into the world."

Now cries of "Bernardo! Bernardo!" rend the air; the brazen trumpets sound, the shrill clarion calls to arms—and as he hears the warlike sound, the peasant quits his team to grasp a spear, the shepherd watching his flock by running streams flings down his crook and rushes forward, the youth whose limbs have never felt the weight of armour, the old men who sit at home at ease, all swell the crowd, as mountain torrents receive neighbouring rills.

"We are born free," they say, "and free we will remain. No Frankish king shall rule over Leon. Anointed cravens may barter the land, but under the lion who bathes his paws in blood we will fight for 'our land.'"

Three thousand men follow Bernardo to the field, all animated with the spirit of their chief. The secret infamy which hangs over his birth he dares not fathom, nor why his father is concealed, or in what manner he is connected with the king! Some foul

injustice has clearly been done him. The thought of it rankles deeply in his soul. With this feeling comes a growing hatred to Alonso, who at least has been privy to this concealment, if not the cause.

Then, ashamed of permitting his own private griefs to intrude on the noble mission he has in hand, Bernardo calls to Don Favila to ride beside him.

"What will the king say to this armament, *amigo*?" are his first words. "Surely he will now understand the vainness of his purpose! In what disposition did you leave him?"

"I think he is much shaken," is the reply, "but there are secret reasons. You, my lord, best know his mind."

Bernardo heaves a deep sigh.

"Talk not to me of him," he exclaims, "he is a hypocrite, unworthy of an honest man's regard." Then, seeing the look of amazement on Don Favila's face, "Yes! by Santiago! such is my mind, and I will fling my mailed glove into his cursed face and tell him so, if I return from the present adventure."

More and more amazed, Don Favila listens. "If it were not so early in the day, good Bernardo, I should think you had quaffed too many beakers of wine to our success."

"Do I look like a man who has wine in him?" answers Bernardo, bitterly. "If wine would drown my care, I would drink a sack."

"Tell me," continues Favila, burning with curiosity, "by our long friendship, what is there amiss between you and King Alonso? You were wont to love him well."

"Then it is past," replies Bernardo, chafing under the questioning. "I hate him now. It is possible you can judge of the reason better than I. I pray you, good Favila, ask me no more; it is useless looking back."

Don Favila, as a prudent man, held his peace. Although of a gentle and courteous nature, there was that in Bernardo that no one dared to cross. A look of sullen wrath is on his face he has never seen before. Has he at last discovered the secret of his birth and the cruelty of the chaste king?

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Now the little army, passing by pleasant hedge-rows and fertile fields, reaches the borders of the Ordega, crossed by a wooden bridge so narrow that much time is occupied by the passage of the troops.

A sound of the approach of many horsemen, galloping rapidly, comes from the road they had just traversed, and clouds of dust from the dry soil sweep to the height of the tree-tops. Voices are heard, and the roll of drums and call of trumpets, but nothing as yet is seen.

"We are set upon by foes," shouts Don Ricardo, hastily seeking out Bernardo, who, with a set white face, watches, immovable in the saddle, the passage of the knights across the bridge.

"Foes," answers Bernardo, with a mocking laugh; "methinks, Ricardo, you are suddenly grown blind not to recognize your countrymen. These are no foes, but our own townsmen come out to join us."

As he speaks, nearer and nearer comes the

clamour, and louder and louder upon the breeze rises the cry, "*El Rey, El Rey,*" echoing back from a thousand voices along the line.

"Yes, it is he," says Bernardo to those around. "I know him by his helmet, set with gems, and the fur collar over his corselet. By the rood, it is well he acknowledges his wrong."

And as he turns his eyes upon Don Alonso, such a loathing possesses him, nothing but the cause he has in hand keeps his hand from his weapon to avenge his wrong.

Meanwhile the king's arrival in face of the army is greeted by a shout so long and loud mountain and hill ring with it.

In the tall, thin warrior, with a long white beard, nobly wearing a regal diadem about his burnished helmet, no one would recognize the emaciated anchorite who scourged and starved himself. The words of Bernardo had stung him to the quick. He had cast off the delusions which had filled his brain; the French monks were sent to whence they came, the armed messenger dismissed, the pledges he had given to Charlemagne withdrawn. Even the horror of his sister's sin in the person of Bernardo, had yielded to the nobleness of his conduct, and like a man distraught suddenly restored to his right senses, he had ridden out to join him.

The shouts of the crowd (for the distance from Leon had not prevented many of the citizens following the soldiers) for a time drowned every other sound.

Again and again King Alonso bows to the saddle-bow, and again and again from three

thousand voices comes the cry, "*Viva el Rey!* Leon! Leon to the rescue!"

Nor, in this moment of triumph, as he lingers on the brink of the river, proudly contemplating the gallant body of knights, who crowd round him to touch, if possible, the noble charger which bears him, his mailed hands, his rich saddle-cloth and the royal standard borne before him, does he forget Bernardo.

Calling to him in a loud voice he commands him to leave the van of the army and place himself at his side.

Then raising the crossed hilt of his jewelled sword before his face, he utters a brief prayer, and turns towards the thousands of eager visages upraised to his.

"O men of Leon," are his words, contemplating them with moistening eyes, "to this brave knight—Bernardo del Carpio—I confide the land. Where he leads, follow!"

CHAPTER XX.

DEATH OF SIR ROLAND THE BRAVE.

In front of the many valleys opening out from under the dark range of the Pyrenees, they met—the Gaul and the Spaniard. The Emperor Charlemagne with good cause curses the fickleness of the King of Leon, who had invited him to inherit his kingdom, and instead came out to offer him battle. Personally, he is not mentioned as taking part in the battle—indeed, it is said he was encamped eight miles off, near Fontarabia, but he sent forward the flower of his chivalry, those doughty paladins, to be sung by the *romanceiros* and troubadours to all time: Guarinos, ferocious Ferragol, Sir Oliver the gentle, handsome Gayfor, and Roland the brave, who went mad for the love of Angelica, mounted on a powerful steed, which bounds and caracoles as if preparing for a tourney, firmly ruled with one hand, while with the other he carries aloft his famous sword Durindana, followed by his vassals and retainers, in short hauberks and upright caps, with round targets like the Moors.

The two armies meet on undulating ground, descending from the chain of the Pyrenees in front of the Pass of Roncesvalles—through which the French had marched into Spain confident of victory—a close and terrible defile, narrow and deep, cleft into precipitous cliffs following from St. Jean de Luz and the defile of Guvarni on the French side, among almost impassable gorges, which back the city of Pampeluna close on the province of Cantabria, the land of Pelayo.

As a forest of lances and spears set on a plain of gold did the glittering helmets look from afar in the radiance of the sunshine, darkened by clouds of arrows, and the blades of javelins and lances cutting the light of day as the ranks closed in deadly strife of quivering spears and flying pennons falling round wounded horses, the blast of trumpets and cries of dying men.

And gallantly did the King of Leon bear himself, the jewelled crown on his *morion* shining out in the thick of the battle, Favila and Ricardo fighting by his side, when lo! a company of Gallic lords bore down with such force as to leave the king alone, face to face with a knight in dark armour, taller than the rest, a steel helmet pressing on his fiery eyes, and the bars of his vizor raised that all might know him, as he brandishes a sword no other man can wield.

"Where," cries this terrible paladin known as Sir Roland the Brave, flashing fire as he whirls his good sword Durindana in the air, "is that perjured Goth, Alonso of Leon, who bids strangers to his land and seeks to slay them?"

"If you mean me," answers Alonso, spurring forward, "I am here to answer the charge."

"Then make short shrift, false king," cries Roland, "for traitor and felon you are to Charlemagne, and as such you shall die."

In courage the king is not wanting, but he stood almost alone; several of the knights about him were dismounted, and swarms of the enemy were gathering about them where they lay. Already the swords strike fire, but he is soon in evil plight; Durindana has cleft the crown on his head-piece and wounded his good charger. The weakness of his blows show that he is no match for such an antagonist. Alonso staggers in the saddle, when Bernardo, pounding through the centre of the Gothic knights as with the shock of a thunderbolt, spurs forward.

"Shame on you, Sir Paladin," he shouts, "as a craven. Are you blind, that you see not the king's arm is stiff with age? Turn now the fury of your weapon on me, Bernardo del Carpio."

"I know you not, vain boy," is the reply, eyeing Bernardo with disdain. "Get you a beard upon your chin before you feel the steel of Durindana."

"Come on!" shouts Bernardo, glaring at him through the bars of his helmet. "I promise you, you shall know me all too soon for your glory. I am a man in search of death."

The onslaught was so furious that blood flowed in the first encounter; the horses were disabled by the shock. To extricate themselves is the work of a moment, and on their feet they fight.

Then Bernardo, round whose head the good

sword Durindana flashes dangerously near, seizes a battle-axe from the hands of a warrior lying lifeless at his feet, and gathering all his strength, deals such a blow on Sir Roland that the steel pierces down upon his neck, and stretches him, mortally wounded, on the ground.

Smitten to death, like a pious Christian he prepares to yield up his soul to God. But first, collecting all his strength, he clutches his faithful sword and thus addresses it: "O sword of unparalleled brightness, fair Durindana, with hilt of ivory and cross of gold, on which is graven the name of God—whom now wilt thou call master? He that possessed thee was never conquered before; nor daunted by foes, nor appalled by phantoms. O happy sword, never was a fellow made like thee! That thou shalt never fall into the hands of a craven or an infidel, I will smite thee on a rock in twain." And so he did, in the throes of death as he was, cleaving the weapon in twain and flinging it afar. The "*Breach of Roland*," in the Pyrenees, is noted from that day. Then, raising the horn slung over his corselet to his lips, with fast-ebbing breath he blew a blast so shrill that the sound reached even to Charlemagne's camp, who, ignorant of the great disaster, lay in the valley of Fuente Arabia awaiting the issue of the battle.

At length those eyes close in death, called by the minstrels "*the bright stars of battle and victory*," the hands drop which could root up live trees, the noble form stiffens as he lay with outstretched arms in the form of the cross, the sword-hilt of Durindana and the bugle by his side.

Not only Roland, but the gentle Oliver lost his life, and the grim admiral, Guarino, was taken prisoner, so that the Franks lost heart and retreated into the mountain paths by which they came. A terrible massacre ensues, led by Bernardo, and to this day Roncesvalles is known as the "Valley of the Pass of Blood."

CHAPTER XXI.

BERNARDO LEARNS THE SECRET OF HIS BIRTH—JOINS THE MOORS.

AND now Bernardo is home again in the red-walled streets of Leon. Others long for life, he has sought for death; but the dark angel has not answered to his call.

As he paces along a narrow path bordering the city walls, above him the low turrets which Witica had spared, looking over to the green plains of Gallicia, he knows that he has won himself a name as great as that of Pelayo, but a dark frown is on his young face, and gloomy thoughts chase each other through his brain.

How changed from the frank and joyous youth is this dark-visaged warrior! He shuns all his former friends; to no one will he speak, and least of all to the king, whom he justly accuses as the cause of his dishonour.

"What matters the splendour of my deeds," he tells himself, speaking aloud, "when the mystery of my birth shuts me out from knightly deeds? Who will cross swords with Bernardo, save in the tumult of the battle-field? The fair face of woman never will

shine on me; no love token touch my hand, no child call me father. O cruel parents, could not all my achievements move you to own a son so long forgotten? Who are you? Are you dead, to remain unmoved when the name of Bernardo rings throughout Spain? Who knows"—and his mind shifts to another train of thought—"but that my father himself may feel that his name will dishonour me?

"O Bernardo, wrong not your father," speaks a low voice behind him. "It is not his fault, the deep vaults of a prison cover him."

Bernardo, who has not realized that he had been thinking aloud, turned with amazement and found himself face to face with Doña Sol, an ancient gentlewoman, *camaréra* to Queen Berta.

"Now may the saints bless thee, venerable Senhora," he cries, seizing her wrinkled hands, "if you can tell me aught of that which never leaves my thoughts."

"All is known to me," is the answer. "The king was but a child when I first came to the palace, but," and she moved to and fro uneasily, and searched around cautiously with her eyes, "if I should be suspected of having disclosed the secret, nothing but my death would satisfy the king. These ramparts are too public for such speech. Come into the shadow of that tower yonder, where no one can hear us."

Bernardo, who had faced without a thrill the flash of Durindana, grew pale and trembled like a girl.

"Be calm, Bernardo," says the lady, about whose head and neck a long lace mantilla was

folded, disclosing among the folds a worn and gentle face, marked with the trace of many sorrows. "No base blood is in your veins, not a knight in Leon is more nobly born."

"Go on, go on!" urges Bernardo, wringing her hands, "more than my life is in your words."

"The blood of kings," she continues, "is in your veins."

"Ha!" exclaims Bernardo, "then my suspicions are true? The king has ever favoured me. Is he my father? Why should he conceal it?"

"No, no," answers Doña Sol, "the king, dear Bernardo, is not your father, but you are of his blood. That keeps everyone silent who would dare to tell you, for the king has forbidden it, on pain of death!"

"Then who is my father?"

"Don Sancho Diez, Count of Saldanha," answers the Dueña, the greatest noble in Leon, and your mother is the Infanta Doña Ximena, sister of the king."

"But the king called me Bastard!" cries Bernardo.

"It was a true marriage all the same," replies the *camaréra*, "only, as Doña Ximena was destined to be the Abbess of the Convent of San Marcos, the king considered it an adulterous union, she being dedicated to the Church. I should know all about it, seeing I stood by them at the altar."

"You! you!" exclaims Bernardo, passing from astonishment to astonishment, as, following her step by step, she drew aside, alarmed at his threatening countenance. "Why did you never speak?"

"Because your mother, alas! is dead, and your father"—here Doña Sol stopped, her courage failed. She heartily wished she had never undertaken the dangerous office. She was as one who having let loose the bulwarks of a mighty flood, stands trembling by, to contemplate the havoc he has made. How was she to tell the truth to this impetuous soldier, standing over her trembling in every limb?

"My mother dead!" repeats Bernardo in a deep low voice, his fingers grasping the hilt of a dagger at his waist, his haggard face turned on her, "and my father, where?"

"Alas! I know not," sobs the terrified Dueña, bursting into tears. "For long he lay in the castle of Luna, imprisoned, but if he is alive still I do not know."

"Then I will speedily discover!" says Bernardo, and without a word he rushes from her presence.

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Alonso, returned from the wars, had resumed his former mode of life. With his armour he had doffed the sentiments of a man. He is too old to change. Again monks and friars gather round him, and flatter him with praises of the virtue of continence which will make his name illustrious. Again he fasts and flagellates himself as before.

The thought of what he owes Bernardo troubles him, but not for a moment does the obstinacy of his resolution relax. Never will he acknowledge him, or liberate his father.

It is evening, the fretted towers of the gothic

cathedral glisten against a bank of heavy mists, rapidly welling up from the south. The clouds deepen with the twilight. The lustre of a stormy sunset is fading out. The sun disappears, and darker and denser shadows gather and obscure the light. Low thunder rumbles in the distance, and a few heavy raindrops have fallen.

Again, with rapid steps, Bernardo traverses the Roman court of the palace; again he is challenged by the guards as he passes. Neither Don Ricardo or Favila are there. Ricardo was badly wounded at Roncesvalles, and the gay Favila is gone to lead a sally against the Moors, those ever-pressing adversaries, not to be wholly overcome for many a long year.

But the dog Poilo is there, the noble hound who forgets neither friend nor foe. Wagging his tail, he leaps forward and with sharp barks of joy flings himself upon Bernardo, licking his hands and thrusting his large nose between his fingers.

But Bernardo passes and heeds him not; nay, in his fierce mood, he raises his hand as if to strike him, as barring his desperate path—but he forbears as he meets a keen pair of faithful eyes fixed on his face, which, if a dog can shed tears as some pretend, are filled with moisture at the rude rebuff; then, retiring to a distance, his tail between his legs, Poilo sadly watches the figure of Bernardo as he strides hastily onwards up the stairs to seek the king.

He is seated at a table, in company with a monk, and is at that moment employed in turning over the

leaves of an illuminated missal, on the value of which he is descanting. The same aged chamberlain who so stoutly maintained the justice of the king's conduct towards Doña Ximena, peaceably slumbers in a corner, his ivory wand of office in his hand.

Suddenly the monotonous voice of the monk ceases, for, raising the arras which hangs before the entrance, Bernardo del Carpio stands in the doorway. His cap is in his hand, his eyes are turned on the ground, but his compressed lips and tightly knitted hands betray his agitation.

Since the battle of Roncesvalles, Bernardo and the king have not met alone. The debt of gratitude he owes him has envenomed the king's mind. His tenderness has turned to jealousy and suspicion.

"How now, Bernardo," he says in an angry voice, raising his eyes from the manuscript, "do you presume so much on your success that you dare to come unbidden into my presence?"

"Perhaps I do," replies Bernardo, advancing into the room and placing himself at the head of the table in front of the king, spite of the feeble efforts of the old chamberlain, who has woke up and endeavours to prevent it.

"Perhaps I have the right."

"Ha! what right?" demands Alonso, gazing at him curiously from under the bushy fringe of his eyebrows.

"The right of your nearest of blood," answers Bernardo, his eyes fixed on the king.

"Now curses on you!" exclaims Alonso rising,

and stretching out his thin hands, as if to shut out the image of one who represented to him mortal sin. "It is a lie. Who can have told you?"

"No matter," answers Bernardo; "suffice it that I know."

"Talk not to me of kinship. You have no name save that of the traitor who bore you."

"Nay, drive me not too far, old man. You are my king and I have saved your life. Your horse was wounded under you, the sword of Roland was at your throat, your blood flowed like water when I ventured mine."

"Seize him, seize him!" shouts Alonso. "Guards, where are you? What?" turning to the chamberlain, "do you favour this braggart?" But no one stirs. The monk had glided out at the first entrance of Bernardo, and the old chamberlain, whose peaceful life had never led him into scenes of strife, stands with open eyes, transfixed with terror.

"Now listen, Don Alonso," cries Bernardo, mastering the rage which, like a whirlwind, had seized him at sight of the king. "Either on the instant you promise to give into my hand my father, Don Sancho of Saldanha, or I will fortify my Castle of Carpio and take service with the Moor. I am at least near enough the throne in blood not to serve a liar and a hypocrite."

These words are spoken slowly. His voice has a strange ring in it. "Now, by this blade, which I have proved owes no lord but Heaven and me, King, Conde or Grandeza, swear, King Don Alonso, to set my father free."

"Nay, Bernardo," answers the king, putting by

the weapon with his hand. "Not in this guise let us speak."

His look and manner had suddenly changed. He is roused into alarm at Bernardo's threat of taking service with the Moor, not in his case only but in many others the last refuge of disappointed patriots.

"Your father shall be free, according to your desire. I give you my royal word. On the seventh day from this, you yourself shall meet him at Salamanca. Of the imprisonment of the Conde de Saldanha and my treatment of—" (even now he could not bring himself to pronounce Doña Ximena's name), "I am answerable to God and to the Church alone. My conscience absolves me; my reasons are my own. No oath is needful," seeing that Bernardo still held his sword. "Let us part friends."

"No, by the Holy Virgin of Compostela, we never can be friends. You have blasted my life and that of those who bore me. I would die a hundred deaths ere such a thing could be."

"Bethink you of my former kindness to you," urges the king. "You bore the standard of Leon in the wars."

No answer comes from Bernardo. There was that in the sudden change of the king's demeanour which roused his suspicions. He liked not the smoothness of Alonso's speech nor the smile he had called up. Could he be mocking him?

"You hesitate!" cries Alonso. "Are you bold enough to doubt a king's word?"

Still no answer, but Bernardo's eyes gather upon him, as though he would read his soul. Then,

boldly as he had come, he turns on his heel, and raising the arras, passes out.

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Upon the broad corn-bearing country about Salamanca a pavilion is erected, by order of the king, at the spot where Bernardo is to meet his father.

With him are Don Ricardo and Favila, by the king's command, and a company of knights "to do honour to the meeting of a father and long-parted son."

As they draw near the city walls, the noise of timbrels and trumpets sounds on the breeze, and a glittering band of fifty guards with naked swords, and a troop of knights wearing their vizors up, are seen advancing along the Roman bridge of many arches which crosses the river.

Foremost among them rides a splendidly accoutred figure in a coat of mail; long sleeves of crimson velvet fall from his shoulders, a shield with his cognizance catches the light, a hood and collar of mail conceal his face; his lower limbs are sheathed like the body in plates of steel, a broadsword and poignard hang at the saddle-bow, and his horse, a massive charger, is enveloped, like his master, in plaited mail.

When Bernardo beholds this superbly armed cavalier slowly passing the bridge, the linked bridle of his war horse held by two pages, and an esquire behind carrying his lance and shield, "O God!" is all he can say; "it is the Count of Saldanha. He is coming at last—my father," and he spurs his horse into a wild gallop.

Already he has dismounted to kiss his father's hand, already he clasps his mailed gauntlet and

looks into his face. Great God! It is the livid countenance of a corpse! The dead weight of Bernardo's hand causes the body to swerve and fall forward upon the saddle bow.

Alonso has kept his word, the Count of Saldanha is given free into his hands, but he has been secretly murdered in prison, and it is his dressed-up body that appears before his son!

A cry of agony comes from Bernardo.

"Oh, father, Don Sancho Diaz," are his words, as he reverently replaces the body on the saddle, "in an evil hour did you beget me: I have given everything for you, and now I have lost all."

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To his stronghold, the castle of Carpio, Bernardo carried his father's corpse, and placed it in the centre of the chapel before the altar. Beside it he kneels, a broken-hearted man.

There lies the parent he has so long sought in vain, and whose existence was a mystery to him from his birth. Dead he is, and yet to this lonely man something tangible is before him even in his corpse—something with which he can commune as with his own.

After a while rising up, his eyes fixed on the bier, Bernardo unsheathes the sword with which he slew Roland and saved the king at Roncesvalles.

"O sword!" he cries, "my trusted blade. In my hand you have drunk the blood of France, be strong for my revenge! Never in a more sacred cause was weapon drawn. My father thirsts for your sure stroke, and his son can wield it. Go up, go up, thou blessed spirit, into the hands of God,"

and he stoops to kiss the dead man's hand, "and fear not that the blood flowing in Bernardo's veins shall be spared in vengeance on Alonso."

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Here the *romancieros* leave him. He did not kill the king, but he made good his promise of joining the Moors in revenge for his father's murder, and died fighting against the king.

CHAPTER XXII.

EL CONDE DE CASTILA.

CASTILE formed no part of the new kingdom of Leon and was governed by its own lord. And here we come on a noticeable history of how the lion was added to the castle on the arms of Spain by the last Conde de Castila, Fernan Goncalze, the founder of the line of the present dynasty, as distinguished from that of the early Gothic kings, who died out in the person of Bernardo the Third, the last descendant of Pelayo, A.D. 999.

Now King Sancho the Fat, King of Leon, A.D. 955, noticeably a heavy and lazy man, leaving much in the hands of his mother, Doña Teresa, is jealous of the power of Castila, and has joined with her brother, the King of Navarre, in a conspiracy to divide it between them, for which purpose the count is invited to Leon to attend the Cortes, where vital matters concerning that never-ending strife between the Christians and the Moors are to be considered.

Fernand comes, but misdoubting Don Sancho's good faith, brings with him so numerous a retinue of knights and men-at-arms that no open attack on

him is possible. But the Queen Doña Teresa like a wicked fairy, steps in.

"What matters," says she to the fat Sancho, speaking within the recesses of the same Roman Palace where Alonso prayed and fasted and Bernardo raged—"What matters how many he brings? We must befool him, flatter, deceive—thus you will take him. Make great show of favour to him, my son, cover him with false words, and unsuspecting he will send his people home."

The Conde de Castila, say the ballads, was a very proper man, in the full bloom of manhood, tall, slender and gay; he wore his mailed armour with a wondrous grace on a perfect form, the red plume on his casque gave him a lordly air, and that he was brave and romantic his history will show.

"Good, my kinsman," says the king to him after many soft phrases, "you have brought with you to Leon the most perfect steed that ever I set eyes on. Methinks if I bestrode him in battle, I could laugh at the Moors."

"Greatly it pleases me," answers the Conde, "that my mare should win your praise; he is a noble animal; a cross with an Arab mare. I pray you to accept Sila for your own."

"Nay," replies the wily king, "that is not fair. Had you come with that intention, it might be otherwise; but, as I have induced you to so generous an offer, let us fix a just price, especially as the hawk you wear upon your wrist has greatly caught my fancy too. For horse and hawk we will settle thus: if the sum fixed on between us be not

paid by this day year, it shall be *doubled* every succeeding one."

"As you will, King Don Sancho," the Conde made reply. "I would have given them both freely to you; but so let it be."

Showing in this most cunning answer that, great *hidalgo* as he was, he was not above accepting such moneys as came in his way. Nor did the King of Leon disdain to make a bargain to his mind, which gave him both horse and hawk for nothing, seeing that he and his wicked mother did not intend the Conde to live.

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Here they are interrupted by Queen Doña Teresa entering the chamber, preceded by her Jefé bearing a silver wand and followed by her dueña. A stately and commanding figure, even in middle age, and splendid in her apparel. The rings on her fingers are worth a king's ransom; her widow's coif is sown with pearls, and the edges of her long robe trimmed with a dark fur and jewels. A very imposing personage, Doña Teresa, who rules both her son and in the palace with a rod of iron. As Regent, she had attempted to do the same with Castile, but the Gothic nobles and the Gothic church resisted, and put her down.

"How now?" says she, seating herself on a ponderous chair, heavy with carving, as the others rise and make low obeisance, her dueña, in a stiff starched black robe and high head-dress, standing behind her. "Your talk is of horses and of hawks, when such serious matter presses in the Cortes? Have you no better entertainment," turning to

her son, "for the Conde when Almanzor reigns at Cordoba, and harries us with his troops? Hakim, the book-worm, was an easy man, and spent his time in buying rare manuscripts and parchments; but this one is a fire-brand, and his generals, Ghalid and the Prince of Zab, take from us much booty and many towns. If God aid us not, we shall again become tributaries to the Moors."

"Doña Teresa the Queen," answers the Conde, bowing with the lofty courtesy natural to him, in reply to this somewhat rude and boisterous speech, "you cannot address one more of your own mind than myself. If Don Sancho and I discoursed on lighter matters, it is not that I am unmindful of the growing power of the infidels. For this cause I am come to the Cortes. By Santiago, do I not know that your royal brother, the King of Navarre, was lately brought to his knees by this same swarthy Almanzor, whom the devil blast! because one Moslem woman was harboured in his land?"

"Truly I have cause to remember it," is her answer, and an evil twinkle came into her eyes. "What say you, Conde, to a closer alliance among the Christians with Navarre, a marriage for instance, as a tighter bond? The Gothic nations can only hope to drive back our enemy by standing by each other. King Garcia has a daughter, very fair, and of singular courage and accomplishments. What say you, whom Nature has formed at all points to please a lady's eye"—(at this compliment the Conde again bowed low, and kissed the queen's hand)—"to an alliance which will bind together the powers of Leon, Navarre, and Castile?"

In the king's face, turned somewhat aside, first came a look of blank astonishment, succeeded by a smile so malignant that had Castila seen it he would certainly not have consented.

"By my faith," are the king's words, suddenly assuming an aspect of the most intense interest, "a very excellent proposal. Refuse it not, my lord. Men say in Leon that I rule, but that Queen Doña Teresa holds the reins of state. Who better? Follow my example. Her judgment is excellent."

But the Conde saw not the matter in that simple light. With much misgiving he had come to Leon. Hostile to him, he knew, was the queen, and Don Sancho was ruled by her.

"You hesitate," exclaims Doña Teresa, her visage forming into a dark frown; "better not to give good counsel than to have it cast in one's teeth."

"Nay, Doña the Queen, I did but consider your words. The matter is too important to be accepted off-hand."

"You bestow your own hand, I suppose, yourself?" she asks with a sneer.

Again the Conde bowed.

"Where else could you give it better? You are not already married, I presume, from a weariness in your mind at having so many who would claim the title."

"It would not become me to say so," put in Fernan, a genuine blush rising on his cheek.

"This alliance would certainly knit the Christians together," urges the king, now speaking with a certain vehemence, "at a moment of great danger to us all. Almanzor is a leader of renown, backed by great riches."

"Why not see the Infanta for yourself?" asks the queen. "Start from here on this joyous pilgrimage of love." Again that strange look came into her eyes, as she fixed them on Fernan, and again the fat king showed his contentment by a hidden glance.

"To see the lady would indeed be my desire," the Conde answers, all the same somewhat staggered by this insistance for his advantage in those he had good cause to know bore him no goodwill. He had hitherto little considered the subject of marriage. Still it was true; the alliance was for the good of all.

"The idea pleases me," he says at last—(perhaps these enemies had come to a better mind). "Thank you, Doña the Queen, and my good kinsman, Don Sancho. This occasion also assures me of your friendship, which I have sometimes had in doubt." Here deprecatory looks passed between the king and his mother, as under protest at such an assertion. "Indeed, at Leon, I am half-way on the road. I will go."

. . . . . .

Gaily Fernan set forth on his journey over the mountains to the Court of Navarre. Not followed, as he came to Leon, with a warlike train, but with gorgeously arrayed chamberlains, esquires, and pages, covered with silk and embroidery, and showy heralds with nodding plumes flying the pennon of Castile, all mounted on horses with fine and slender limbs, accoutred with saddle-cloths and trappings as richly decorated as their riders.

He himself, as Doña Teresa truly said, "was

formed by Nature to please a lady's eye," graceful, athletic, with light-brown hair curling on his neck and a short beard worn in the fashion of the day, partly concealing his regular features, expressive of a singular sweetness; with a voice too, although well tuned to the tone of command, capable of modulating into the gentlest tones of love.

Thus he rode over the plains of northern Spain and through the gorges of the mountains, up the rocky defiles where Roland's blood was shed, to the ancient Roman city of Narbonne, standing on a rock over the sea, time-worn and rugged in aspect, as having borne many a siege, for the small kingdom of Navarre was ever industrious in war.

Don Garcia, the king, feigned great joy at the Conde's arrival. His royal kinsfolk at Leon had put him on the track, but the redoubtable courage of the Conde called for great caution.

And the Infanta, Doña Ava? From the first moment his heart was won.

Entering from her bower chamber into the old hall of the castle of Navarre, where reigned an atmosphere of troubadours and song, he saw her taking her place at a banquet held in his honour.

A very Queen of Hearts she seemed to him, blandly sweet, with tender eyes of heavenly blue, under the curve of faultless eyebrows, a little dimple in her cheek, the very home of love, and smiling lips, curved like Cupid's bow.

"By my faith!" muttered Fernan to himself, as he doffed his jewelled cap, and advances to kiss her hand; "but she is fair enough to move St. Anthony himself. Methinks I have been most

unjust in doubting the good faith of Doña Teresa in proposing to me so sweet a bride."

And the Infanta loved him: and her treacherous father, Garcia Sanchez, tempted by the prize to be attained, of half of the kingdom of Castile, by all means encouraged their frequent meetings in bower and hall, in hawking, falcon on wrist, when they rode together in the woods, or when the troubadours tuned their lyres to sing *cancioneros* when the sea-winds were still.

How can words tell of the raptures of the Conde? His greatest enemies had procured his greatest joy! He had only to stretch out his hand to clasp a jewel without price. Tender delusions of youth! alas! why should fate shatter them?

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One moonlight night they had wandered together on the battlements of the castle into a plaisaunce of ancient elms, interlacing in thick arches overhead; the dueña, who never left them, disposing of herself apart at a discreet distance.

Below the sea lay calm and still, wrapped in deep shadow, save where wave followed wave, gently catching the moonbeams for an instant, then falling back into an endless rotation.

"Oh, love, how fair is the night," said the Infanta, with a happy sigh, casting her eyes round on earth and heaven. "Methinks I have nothing more to wish."

But Fernan answered not. His gaze is fixed on her; the pale tresses of her golden hair shining through the meshes of a jewelled veil, her eyes melting with fondness, the soft outline of her

face and that adorable dimple—from the first sight of which he dates his present transports—intoxicate his sense, and forgetting that she is an Infanta, daughter of a king, in a moment of passion he clasps her in his arms.

"See, sweetheart," says he, still holding her in his embrace, "how the moonlight flickers on yonder trees."

"Yes," is her answer. "Yet, did I not know we were safe, I could almost believe someone was watching behind the trees. Let us go back to the castle."

"I can see nothing but you," he answers, looking down at her. "You are the very goddess of the night!"

"But it is late," she urges, rising to her feet; "if I stay longer I shall have bad dreams. Let us go."

"Oh, Ava, my Infanta!" he murmurs, pressing her in his arms, "I could stay here for ever! Tell me again you love me! Repeat it a thousand times!"

The language of love is the same in all ages. This was said nearly a thousand years ago, and has been repeated since, millions of times, but what matter? When soul speaks to soul, however fervently, language has limits, therefore there is a certain sameness in the expression.

While the hot words of love are on his lips, the branches of the trees are parted by unseen hands, a group of dark, muffled figures rush out, daggers glitter in the moonlight, and before he can draw his sword he is mastered. Cords bind him hand and foot, a mask is placed upon his face, and

he is hurried below into the deep dungeon of the castle.

The treason is so vile, the act so base, for awhile it seems to him like the glamour of a dream, but the weight of the heavy fetters pressing into his flesh, the dark and narrow cell where light barely penetrates, the damp cold that chills his blood, the shame, the loneliness, the silence—these are no dreams!

"Ah, Ava! Ava! you never loved me!" he cries in his anguish. "Your baneful charms served but as a bait. Now God forgive you, lady; my heart will break, and by your act! The Moors will rejoice, as they pour over the land, that my hand is shortened and I cannot strike! Alas! falseness is in your blood! Who could guess that those heavenly eyes were but as nets to lure me? Ah, King Don Garcia, is this the honour of a Christian knight? Fool, madman that I was, I knew they were traitors, and for the sake of a woman I am trapped, like a page seeking butterflies!"

Thus did the unhappy Conde complain, returning ever to the name of the Infanta. Her treachery was the deepest wound of all.

Now it is that the *romanceros* take up the tale of his captivity, and thus they sang:—

"They have carried him into Navarre, the great Conde de Castila, and they have bound him sorely, hand and heel!

"The tidings up to the mountains go, and down among the valleys!

"To the rescue! to the rescue, ho!"

And the Infanta? Need I say that charming

princess did not deserve his accusations? But she was forced to dissemble, lest his life should be taken by her father, as cruel and remorseless a parent as ever figured in fairy tale or song. Such monsters are frequently met with in the olden time, and the nature of their characters and motives are hard to read by the light of modern times. It is possible indeed such may still exist, but now they snare their daughters' lovers by other means than poison and iron chains, though, perchance, they leave them as husbands as disconsolate as before.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DONA AVA.

At a great festival given by Don Garcia, Doña Ava sat at the board. The jewels that decked her coif and neck but increased the paleness of her eyes. No love-dimple dented her fair cheek, it had vanished with the presence of Fernan, and the white lips he had so boldly kissed gave utterance to secret sighs. She spoke no word as she sat in the light of the torches fixed on the walls, nor took any heed of the great company of guests, but leaned back, lost in dismal remembrance of the night when her lover, with soft brown hair, who had ridden across the mountains to ask her hand, was beside her.

On the raised daïs was a pilgrim knight with a red cross on his breast, arrived from Normandy, and riding through Navarre to cross swords with the Moors at Saragoza. But who he was, or on what special errand he had come, he did not reveal even to the king.

The Infanta took little heed of him, but as the feast proceeded and the gold loving-cup passed round from hand to hand, and each guest quaffed

the red wine in honour of the king, she looked up and saw his eyes earnestly fixed on her.

Then a whisper came to her ear, so low that the voice did not ruffle a hair of the delicate locks which so beautified her face and neck.

"Fernan still loves you," said the voice, "spite of the little kindness you have shown him. I have visited him in prison; I bribed the Alcaide with many golden bezants; you might do the same. Bethink you of the curse which will cleave to your name—worse than Don Julian's daughter, *la Cava*—if his life be lost. For your sake he came into Navarre. It is for you to set him free!"

As the pilgrim spoke Ava's cheeks grew red and white by turns. She trembled, hesitated, while silent tears rose in her eyes, and fell one by one on her rich robe. At length, with faltering voice she whispered back again, watching the moment when the king had turned aside in earnest speech with some nobles from Leon, quaffing to their health in a cup of Cyprus wine taken in the last foray with Almanzor in the north,—

"I promise you I will. Tell me who you are and whence you come. Happy is the prince who possesses such a friend."

Then the stranger explained that he was no pilgrim from Normandy, but a trusty Castilian knight come from Burgos to find his lord, and that so well had he acted his part that he had deceived the whole court and discovered him.

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The dungeon into which the Conde de Castila had been borne by the slaves of Don Garcia (for

so much did Moslem habits prevail at that time, it was common for Christians also to have Nubian and Ethiopian slaves), lay at the foot of many steep flights of stairs in the very foundations of the castle. Overhead the sea boomed against the walls in ceaseless waves, bellowing with thundering uproar.

He had at first been callous to his fate. In the immediate expectation of a violent death, life and its interests had faded from his thoughts. The image of the Infanta was ever with him, but as a bright phantom from another world with whom he could have no concern, rather than as the reality of a mortal love.

Was she true or false? *That* lay in the mystery of the past. As a dying man he had no past. He forgave her, even if she were false. Whither he went she could not follow. He must die, and leave revenge to his people. Soon they will know the treachery of the king. His faithful subject, the seeming pilgrim, will ride straight to Burgos, call together the Cortes and declare war. But little will that help him when he is dead! Alas! all fails!

Day after day he waited for some sign from the friend who had risked his life to find him. None came. He was forgotten, and he longed to die!

In the dead of night he had thrown himself on a rough couch of ox-hide, and, hiding his face in his hands, groaned heavily. At length a feverish sleep had come to his relief, when, starting up, it seemed that the silence was broken by a sound of footsteps.

"Now, by the wounds of Christ, my hour is come," he told himself. "King Garcia will take

from me that life he dare not attempt by combat in the field," and he rises up to meet death as became a man.

The footsteps came nearer and nearer and now there is the dim glimmer of a light.

"They come, they come; but how cautiously. Is it that the assassins would strike me while I sleep?"

Plainer and plainer were the steps, and brighter and brighter shone the light which fell across the floor. Now they are at hand, close at the door. Deftly and noiselessly the heavy chains are loosed. The door opens. A figure, dim in the shadow, stands before him. He strains his eyes in the darkness. Great God! Can it be true? It is the Infanta! She is alone.

"Ava, my princess!" cries Fernan, and such a transport of rapture possesses him the words will scarcely come, "you are not false," and he clasps her to his heart.

Then she explained to him how, following the counsel of the pilgrim knight whom he had sent to her, she had bribed the Alcaide with all the jewels she possessed.

"And could you, Don Conde," says she, gazing up into his face from under the folds of the heavy mantilla which concealed her features, "could you doubt my honour and my faith? Out on the base thought! Shame on your weak love! I waited but the occasion, and it came."

"Oh! let me hear your voice," sighs the love-sick Conde, "though it rain curses on me! Forgive my unworthy doubt, or that in aught I

misjudged you. I am sure you pleaded for me. Have you softened the king's heart?"

"No, not a whit," answers Ava, with a sigh. "His enmity but grows more dangerous as the time wears on for him to depart to Burgos to meet King Don Sancho and his mother."

"To Burgos, my capital?"

"Yes, they will divide your kingdom, and then march against Almanzor. Fernan, you have no friend but me!"

"Now may the foul fiend seize them on the way!" cries the Conde. "Oh! that I had a sword to fight! Castile and Burgos in their hands! The dastards! And I am bound here like a slave!"

"But I am come to free you!" replies the Infanta, with such courage in her voice that already the fresh air of freedom seems to fan his cheek, as with deft hands she loosens his fetters. "The door is open, before you lies the way."

"And you, dear Ava," clasping her willing hand, "are we to part thus?"

At this question she hung her head, and a great blush mounts to her cheeks.

"Ah, my lord," she whispers, and the little dimple came back again, forming near her lip, "I fain would fly with you. For this I came, never to part again."

"Then," says the ballad, "He solemnly saluted the Infanta as his bride on brow and lip, and hand in hand they went forth together into the night."

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Had there been court painters in those days they might fitly have depicted the Conde, flushed with hope, the Infanta at his side, feminine and sweet, as one of those blonde images adored on altars pale amid the perfume of incense, caracolling through the greenwood on their way to Burgos.

The geography of the Conde's progress is rather loose, but we will figure to ourselves a forest glade of wide-branching oaks, which had perhaps sheltered the advance of the Roman legions from Gaul. Athwart rambles a rocky stream, a gentle eminence lies in front, crowned by a group of olives.

As they address themselves to the ascent, the figure of a priest appears, mounted on a mule, equipped in a strange fashion, a mixture of cassock and huntsman, a bugle round his neck and a hawk upon his wrist.

"Now stop you. Stop you," he shouts, placing himself full across the way; "Castila knows you both, fair Infanta, and you, Lord of Castila. I have seen you at the castle. What unlawful game are you after? Dismount, Sir Conde, and give account to me, the purveyor of these forests for the king." And the bold priest presses his mule close up to them.

"By the rood! Conde or no Conde, I will dismount to please no man," answers he. "Nor shall the Infanta, as you say you know her. Remove yourself, I pray, Sir Priest, from our way, or your tonsure shall not save you from a whipping."

"That is at my pleasure," is the reply. "But as the Infanta seems to have yielded willingly to your blandishments, Conde de Castila, I stay you not if you pay me a fitting ransom."

"A ransom!" quoth he, "that is a most singular demand from a consecrated priest, who ought to be saying his prayers, instead of hawking in the greenwood. No ransom will I pay."

"Then I will teach you a lesson," and the vagrant churchman raises his bugle to his lips. "A note from my little instrument and you will soon lie again in chains."

"Do your worst, craven," shouts the Conde in a rage, spite of the whispers of the Infanta, seated behind him on a pad of the broad saddle, her arms clasped round his waist; "it shall never be said that Fernand Gonzales yielded to a pilfering clerk."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than, reddening with rage, the priest blew a long loud blast, among the ancient oaks. At this the Infanta could no longer keep silence.

"Help, help!" she shouts, "for the Conde de Castila," and Gonzales, though embarrassed with her weight, rides fiercely forward raising his hand to strike, for he has no sword. But the treacherous priest, setting spurs to his mule, galloped down the glade at headlong speed, sounding his horn. The noise he made was heard by others—the rattle of horses' hoofs came rapidly in the wind, and a company of horsemen advance with threatening aspect.

"Ah, now is our time come!" cries the Infanta, "the vile priest has done for us. We cannot fly. Alack! alack! the evil day!"

"Nay, comfort thee, sweet one," answers Fernan, "I will face them, though I die." At which

the tears stream down Doña Ava's face, and she clasps her arm tighter around him.

"Now, by the heaven above us," exclaims the Conde, what miracle is this? It is my own dear standard—the banner of Castile! There is 'the Castle' as large as life on its gold ground. Long may it flourish, the blessed sign. Draw near, draw near, my merry men! Behold, my sweet Infanta,"—stealing a hidden kiss—"these are my own true subjects! Castile, Castile to the rescue! Look, how bright are their lances! How the sun shines on the blades! Every sword is for my Ava; every sword gleams for her! Ah! there is my trusty knight, brave Nuño Ansares, who visited me in prison," addressing the leader of the troop. "Never did vassal better serve his lord! The horn of that robber-priest, instead of harming us, has saved our lives. Now to Burgos ride, ride for our lives!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARRIAGE OF DONA AVA AND EL CONDE DE CASTILA—TREACHERY OF DONA THERESA.

Burgos was reached without further incident, and in a few days the marriage of the Conde and the Infanta was solemnized with great pomp in the church of Sant Agueda on the hill, under a mantle of delicate sculpture which lined the walls.[1]

Now here it should be said, as in the fairy tales—"They married and lived happily ever after." Not at all. We are only at the beginning of their troubles.

The rage of Don Sancho of Leon and King Garcia of Navarre, the father of Doña Ava, knew no bounds. Genuine rage, for they had both been caught in their own trap, a thing utterly unbearable to malignant natures, be they kings or commons.

As to the King of Navarre, who not only had lost a highly valuable marriageable daughter, but the half of the kingdom of Castile, he at once assembled a strong army, under the pretence that the Conde had feloniously carried off the Infanta—a curious accusation, considering that he himself had consented to their nuptials.

[1] The beautiful cathedral at Burgos was built later by Fernando El Santo, King of Castile.

"Let us wait till he comes to a better mind," urged Doña Ava, from her palace at Burgos, looking out over those rich plains which are the glory of central Spain; "after all, I *am* his daughter, he cannot harm *me*."

But this Christian point of view was not shared by the King of Navarre, who from his mountains executed such raids on Castile that Gonzales had no choice but to face him.

Near Ogroño was the battle, not far from Burgos, by the river Ebro, and hardly was it fought, and victory only gained by a clever feint, headed by the Conde in person. Don Garcia's camp was seized and he himself taken prisoner.

Now face to face they stand within a tent, the father-in-law and son. The casque of the king battered, his armour bleared, his chief knights in a like plight, prisoners beside him—the Conde in front brandishing a blood-stained sword, with such a sense of wrong gnawing at his heart as for a time leaves him speechless.

Then the words of reproach come rushing to his lips. "False king, did I not come in peace to Narbonne, and you gave me the royal kiss of welcome? Did I not eat at your board? Sleep the sleep of peace under your roof? Ride with you? Jest with you? Live as man to man of the kinship we are to each other? Did you not" (and here his upraised voice breaks into a softer tone as he names her), "give me your daughter, the Infanta, as my wife, and, while her hand was clasped in mine, her kiss upon my cheek, did you not bind me, vile king, in chains, and hurl me into a dungeon, where but

for her help, the angel of my life, I should have died unheeded?"

To all this Don Garcia, with eyes cast on the ground, answers not a word, his armed figure defined against the pattern of rich brocade which lines the tent under the light of torches.

"Now to Burgos with you, King of Navarre, and as you did by me, so be it done to you! That is bare justice!"

"Ah! good my lord," came the soft voice of Doña Ava into his ear, as she went out to meet him with her ladies to the Gate of Santa Maria, beside the river which flows by the walls of Burgos —"Remember, Don Garcia is my father."

"Now prythee hold your peace, fair wife," is his reply, "much as I love you he shall this time meet his due. Nor shall he return to Navarre until he pays me a full ransom."

But like the gentle dropping of water (and drops, we know, wear even stones, much more the soft substance of which hearts are made) came the entreaties of the Infanta. After all they were married, and Don Garcia had suffered a grievous defeat, which had weakened him for mischief for many a day!

So at the end of a year the prison was unbarred and a great festival held in the old Palace of Burgos, of which no trace remains; a throne glittering with cloth of gold, raised in the midst of carpets and screens and awnings of brocaded silk, a luxury borrowed from the Moor—from whom, much as they fought them, all refined tastes were acquired; and afterwards, at the board in royal robes, Don Garcia

is seated side by side with Castile (Doña Ava, crowned with a royal diadem, between), as they quaff the generous wine of Valdepeñas in healths of eternal amity and alliance.

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Again the Cortes are assembled in haste, in the northern city of Leon, to determine conclusions against the Moors.

The Caliph Almanzor, coming from Cordoba, had penetrated north as far as Santiago di Compostella, in Galicia, sacked the shrine, the very Mecca of Spain, where countless miracles were wrought by his bones; and, insult of insults, pulled down the bells and hung them (oh, horror!) in the *Mesquita of Cordoba*, where they still remain! So that Fernan gladly hastened to obey Don Sancho's summons, along with the kings of Aragon and Navarre. Years had passed, a son had been born to him, and many acts of courtesy exchanged, as between royal kinsfolk.

To recall the past was by no means in harmony with his forgiving temper. "Perhaps he will pay the debt he owes me," was his thought, "for my horse Sila and the hawk he bought of me so long ago; the sum must by this time be a big one."

It was night when the council ended, and the royal company assembled in the hall, having exchanged their heavier garments for fanciful doublets and mantles of tissues woven in Eastern looms, set off with fur and gems—graceful *toques* to correspond, replacing helmet and head-piece, a feather lying low on the shoulder, or peaked caps encircled with garlands of jewels, the badge of his house

embroidered on each knight's breast. As each guest took his place with that solemn demeanour common to Spaniards, a flourish of trumpets sounded, a side door opened, and Doña Teresa appears, upright to stiffness, wearing her crown upon her head, her son Don Sancho advancing with respectful courtesy to place her on his right hand.

All eyes are fixed on Don Fernan Gonzales, the youngest of the princes. Happiness and loyalty looked out of his comely face, grace was in every movement, as he exchanged compliments with his royal kinsmen—Aragon, a broad-shouldered man, frank and true in nature; Navarre, dark and preponderant, his eyes bent significantly on his son-in-law; and his nephew of Leon, Don Sancho the Fat, grown so obese he moves in his royal robes with difficulty.

The feast, spread on oaken tables covered with scarlet cloths, blazed with the sheen of precious candelabra, cups inlaid with rubies, and silver figures trimmed with posies of flowers, aromatic herbs and green boughs from the wood, the walls hung with damascened draperies and a fair Moorish carpet on the floor. The fish, flesh, and fowl served in heavy silver platters are offered entire to each guest, who with his dagger cut his own portion, drinking from silver goblets placed at his side.

At the conclusion of the banquet, to the blare of trumpets, King Don Sancho rises to lead his mother to her retiring room, with the same state as she had entered.

Already the kings of Navarre and Aragon had

passed on, and the Conde de Castile was preparing to follow when an armed hand was placed on his shoulder and a voice uttered in his ear: "You are my prisoner."

"Your prisoner?" cried he, looking round to behold a circle of armed men, who had silently gathered behind his chair as he was in the act of making obeisance to the queen, "by my troth! this is an idle jest. You have mistaken your man, my masters. Look elsewhere."

"Not at all," cries Queen Doña Teresa, disengaging her hand from that of the king, the old malignant smile glittering in her black eyes. "Did you think, Sir Conde, we were as green as you, who come unarmed a second time among your foes? The bird that had flown is recaptured! Ha! ha!" and she gave a bitter laugh. "I think I can prophesy you will not escape this time! The dungeons of Leon are better guarded than those of Narbonne!"

"Queen Doña Teresa," is his answer, his arms already bound by fetters, "*I* take no shame for *my* lack of suspicion. Rather is it for *you*, so royally born, to blush at such baseness. *You*," and, spite of himself, his eyes flamed with rage as he realized that he had again fallen into the power of his remorseless kinsfolk, "you are a disgrace to the royal lineage you represent. See, even the king, your son, casts down his eyes. Don Sancho is ashamed of his mother!"

Stung by his reproaches the queen raises her hand as a signal to the guards to bear him away.

"What manner of man is this?" she says, turn-

ing to the king, who, though he had joined in the conspiracy, now stood irresolute and pale, a silent witness to his mother's treachery. "He dares to jeer at me with the chains about his neck. But a long life passed in a Gothic dungeon will bring down his pride. Fear not, my son, what can he do? When the half of his kingdom is in your hands you will thank me."

"But our kinswoman the Infanta will offer a large ransom. Can you refuse *her?*"

"Refuse!" retorts the queen, her tall figure drawn up to its full height; "there is no treasure in the world that shall buy off the Conde de Castile. His death alone will satisfy me."

And with a menacing gesture in the direction by which he had disappeared, she swept out of the hall as she had come, followed by her retinue.

CHAPTER XXV.

DONA AVA OUTWITS DON SANCHO AND RELEASES HER HUSBAND.

TIME passed and a new element makes itself felt in the struggle between the Christians and the Moors. The powerful tribe of the Berbers had fastened like leeches on the Gothic lands of the north, and Almanzor, by his constant attacks in the south, had paralyzed the kings of Leon and Navarre into mere tributaries. But selfish and unloyal as they are, Doña Teresa and the kings of Leon and Navarre never lose sight of their determination to possess Castile, and instead of joining heartily against a common enemy they each summon every lord and vassal they possess to appear in arms to march against Burgos.

Don Sancho at least understood his real position, and would willingly have accepted the large ransom offered by the Infanta for her lord, but his mother was not to be persuaded. His dark-browed uncle of Navarre, too, was as violent and as short-sighted as she, so that Don Sancho could only offer up fervent prayers to Santiago, the patron of Spain, whose shrine at Compostella had, to his everlasting shame, been so ill defended.

Would the celestial knight again appear on his milk white charger clad in radiant mail and ensure

a victory as when King Ramiro, his predecessor, refused to pay "the Maiden Tribute" exacted by the Caliph? Would he come? And never did sovereign put up more fervent *Ora pro nobis Sancta Maria* than the fat king, and invocations to all the calendar of saints.

. . . . . .

In the midst of his devotions a scratch is heard at the door, the curtain is drawn aside, and the head of a Jefé appears. At an impatient motion of the king, indicating that he would not be disturbed, the Jefé bows low.

"Good, my lord," are his words, "what am I to do? Here is a pious pilgrim bound for Compostella, earnestly desiring to see your Grace."

"For Compostella," answers the king. "Ah! he is welcome, admit him at once. He can tell me, on his return, in what precise condition the sanctuary is left. That last raid of the Moor lies heavy on my soul."

In a few moments the pilgrim stands before him, his face concealed by a close-fitting cap, heavily charged with drapery, which he wore on his head.

"In what matter," asks Don Sancho, with a gracious smile, "can the King of Leon advantage you, good pilgrim? If it is within my power, command me."

"My lord," answers the pilgrim, in tones which fell caressingly on the ear, "I humbly thank your Grace. I am bound for Compostella, to fulfil a vow concerning your prisoner, the Conde de Castila."

"The Conde de Castila!" exclaims the king,

half starting from his chair. "He is clean forgotten. As well talk of a dead man."

"I crave your pardon if I have said aught amiss, but the Conde has caused deep sorrow to me. In my wrath I invoked a curse upon him, in the name of the blessed Saint, and now I am bound to render thanks for his death."

"Death!" ejaculates Don Sancho, turning pale, "who talks of his death?"

"I," answers the pilgrim, with a singular decision. "I know that the death of the Conde is near!"

"By whose hand?" demands the king, greatly excited. (Did this holy person know of some secret conspiracy of Doña Teresa to assassinate him, and had he come to reveal it?)

"By mine," whispers the pilgrim, mysteriously approaching him. "I have about me a subtle poison, the venom of snakes, given me by a Berber. It never fails; silently it extinguishes life. But it must be properly administered. Lead me to the prison—I will answer for the rest."

Even Don Sancho was staggered by the proposal of this cold-blooded pilgrim, and replies with caution,—

"Should this prove true, I shall not be unmindful of the Saint's claims on me. But, holy pilgrim, much as I honour your design and wish you success, in these warlike times I must demand some sign to assure me of your truth."

"Signs shall not be wanting, O King," answers the pilgrim, in whose voice an eager sweetness seemed to penetrate. "The Holy Apostle

has himself appeared to me in a vision and unfolded deep mysteries concerning Navarre and Leon. The time is not far off when Castile and Leon will be united under one crown, and that union will end the Mussulman rule in Spain."

"O great and holy seer!" ejaculates Sancho the Fat, folding his hands, greatly impressed by what appeared the complete fulfilment of his utmost ambition, "much do I honour you. Disclose, if not bound by a vow, what is your name, that I may impart it to my mother, Doña Queen Teresa."

To this request the pilgrim paid no heed.

"Perhaps you will tell me if the death of the Conde prefigures these events?"

"By the aid of Santiago, yes," is the answer. "Such is the prophecy I have to impart."

Now had Don Sancho been less eager to rid himself of Gonzales by every means, he would have noted the violent agitation which shook the pilgrim's frame.

To poison a sovereign in prison—and a kinsman to boot—was a serious undertaking. Already the words of refusal were on Sancho's lips when the curtains of the apartment fly open and Doña Teresa rushes in.

"What is this I hear?" cries this imperious woman, who had been listening outside, her cruel face darkened by anger. "Shame on your cowardice, Don Sancho; you are no son of mine. What! you would refuse the proposal of this worthy pilgrim? I understand and applaud him. To kill the Conde de Castile is a work of mercy, for by his death the

lives of thousands will be spared on the battle-field."

In the presence of his mother the fat king became mute. Against his better judgment he consents to the death of the Conde.

. . . . . .

Again we come upon Fernan in prison, a very unlikely place for so brilliant a cavalier, but, alas! adverse destiny had again doomed him to pass many months in this second dungeon—much more rough and dismal than the prison of Narbonne as the old city of Leon, with its Gothic traditions, was more uncouth and uncivilized than the capital of Navarre.

"Who are you?" he asks in great surprise as a pilgrim is ushered in. "Nor need I ask; coming from the vile king you can only be a foe."

"I am your friend," answers a voice that struck like music on his ear, "your best, your only friend, my lord and husband," and as the disguise fell to the ground the faithful Infanta stands before her lord.

We will pass over their transports. A decent veil must conceal the mysteries of married life. Naturally the first question he asked was how she came there? Together they laughed while she explained the murderous purpose of the wicked queen.

"But time speeds," she says, tearing herself from his arms. "You must fly. The courage of our good Castilians is damped by your long absence. Not a moment must be lost."

"What! in broad daylight?" asks he. "Is it

so easy a thing to go?" and he gives a bitter laugh.

"No, love, most difficult, but we must change our clothes! I am you, and you are me. In that bed," pointing to a straw pallet, "I stretch myself to die. I have swallowed the poison, and you, my noble husband, in the pilgrim's dress, speed to Burgos. Once under the gateway, you are safe. Oh! greet them well, my dear ones," and, spite of herself, as she thought of her child, silent tears gather in her eyes.

"But, Ava," he exclaims, "greatly as I honour your courage, your fortitude, your skill, ask me not to return to Castile by such means. My sweet wife, the stars in their courses must have willed that I should die; leave me to my fate."

"Never!" cries the valiant woman. "Here," and she plunges her hand into her bosom, "is the poison. If you do not fly, I will swallow it before your eyes."

A gesture of horror was his reply.

"Besides," she continues, her face lighting up. "What have I to fear? Danger to my life there is none! You cannot imagine my own aunt would murder me! Away, away, or some fatal accident may hinder!"

. . . . . .

Meanwhile, what pen shall paint the anxiety of the king? How minute by minute he pictured each detail of the agonies of the expiring Conde. Truly the possession of Castile seemed to his guilty mind at that moment too small a boon to compensate for the throes of his guilty conscience. Had such tortures continued, Sancho would never have come

down to posterity with the surname of "the Fat," but rather have melted into a shadow in the land of dreams! At last, unable any longer to bear such suspense, he called a page, and commanded that the pilgrim should be brought before him.

"He is gone," replies one of the officers of the prison, who had presented himself to reply.

"Gone!" shouts Sancho, "without my leave? What does this mean? Is the Conde safe?"

"Safe, indeed," answers the officer; "but half an hour ago I carried him a meal, by special order, and a good one."

"A meal?" quoth the king, utterly amazed. "Could he eat?"

"Surely," is the answer, "and glad he seemed to get it."

"Did he not appear to suffer? Was he—well—did nothing ail him?"

"Nothing, my liege. I never saw a prisoner more *débonnaire*, but he seems grown strangely short to my eyes; he certainly has dwindled."

"You are a fool!" cries the irritated king; "I must look into this matter myself. Bring him to my presence."

"By the rood, but he does seem strangely altered," muttered the king, as the prisoner stands before him. "Surely"—and a suspicion did shoot through his mind, to be dismissed at once as ridiculous, as they approach each other.

"Well, Sir Conde, are the prisons of Leon better guarded than those of Narbonne?" he asks, with a sneer.

"Much better, Sir King, one can escape more

easily. For a sovereign so versed in plots and conspiracies—*murder* even "—(at this word the king gave a great start)—"you are marvellously at ease."

King Sancho became so bewildered, his head was going round. Was he bewitched? Was this the Conde or not? And if not, *who?*

Then Doña Ava, speaking in her own natural voice, broke out into peals of laughter.

"Surely, Don Sancho, a bachelor like you cannot be so ungallant as to imprison a lady?"

"A lady! A woman! God's mercy! what does this mean? Who has dared to deceive me?"

"I," answers the Infanta. "Shower your wrath on *me*, your kinswoman. May I not be a deceiver when so many of my blood excel? The queen, for instance? Now look at me, Sancho, and let this folly end."

And the king did look, and into a most towering passion he fell, using more bad language than I care to repeat.

"A curse upon you!" are his first intelligible words. "Where is that villain, your husband?"

"In Castile," she answers, "or far on the way. Never fear, he will soon return to settle accounts with *you*."

"False woman," and the king, fuming with a sense of intolerable wrong at having been made such a fool of, lifts his hand as if to strike her, "learn to fear my vengeance!"

"Not I," is her answer, laughing again. "You dare do nothing to *me*, and my loved lord is free, skimming like a fleet bird over the plains. I fear you not, you dastard king!"

. . . . . .

Consigning the Infanta into the hands of the palace guards, Don Sancho rushed off to the apartments of the queen. For once that wicked woman was powerless. No one dared harm Doña Ava, specially as rapid news soon spread of the wild joy with which Fernan had been received in Burgos, and that, at the head of his army, he was marching on Leon.

On the other hand, the dark King of Navarre, hard pressed by the Moors, executing forays into the north, as the safety of his daughter was at stake, refused to use his troops for her capture; thus the King of Leon was left alone to bear the brunt of the attack, pillaging, demolishing and burning in true mediæval style.

But Queen Doña Teresa still held good.

"Keep her close. She shall not go, without the ransom of half his kingdom," were her words.

"Now, by Santiago!" exclaims the exasperated king, "ransom or no ransom, she *shall* go. You ruined the kingdom in my father's time, but, by heaven! you shall not play the same game with me!"

For once the fat king insisted. The Condesa de Castila is to be restored to her husband, on condition of the withdrawal of his troops. All seems accommodated when an unexpected difficulty arises.

That little account for the horse and the hawk, which had so pleased the King of Leon on his cousin's first visit, accepted on the condition of making payment in a year or of doubling the price, had never been settled, and it had grown

so enormous that King Sancho finds himself at a loss to find the money. Convenient Jews did not exist in those days as we read of later in the time of the Cid. Now, even a royal debtor looks round in vain for help.

It was in vain that King Sancho cursed the horse and cursed the hawk, then cursed them both together, that did no good, the debt remained unpaid. In this world from little causes spring great events. That horse and hawk, so innocently purchased from the bright-faced Conde, were finally the cause of the independence of Castile. Not able to discharge the debt, King Don Sancho agreed to free Castile from all vassalage to Leon. And the Conde and the Infanta rode back in triumph to Burgos, as the founders of that dynasty which became the most powerful and glorious of the Peninsula, to merge at last in the royal crown of Spain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CID. 1037.

Now we come upon a larger view, a more extended horizon of Old Court Life, hitherto shut up in the pastoral city of Leon.

Don Fernando El Magno is king. He has transferred the Christian capital to Burgos on succeeding to the states of Leon, Castile, and Gallicia by the death of his brother-in-law, Bernardo the Third, in right of his wife, Doña Sancha.

Succeeded is hardly the fit word, for Fernando actually slew Bernardo in the battle of Tamara, clearing thus for himself the way; for Bernardo's sister Sancha was the last of the second line of the Gothic kings descended from Pelayo.

From the time of Fernan Gonzales, Castile became a kingdom instead of a county, as the Conde would have had it, only he died too soon; and though still mixed up in continual battles with the Moors about Saragoza, Toledo, Merida, Samego and Badajos (each town and city a small kingdom of its own), the greater part of the north-centre of Spain belonged to the

Christians, rough warriors for the most part and fond of fighting, of little education, narrow-minded, poor and rapacious. So poor indeed and rapacious that they constantly served the Moors against themselves as *condottieri*, or mercenaries, as is heard of later in French and Italian wars.

Now the Moors might be cruel and bloodthirsty, but their crimes were those of a highly civilized race, the very salt of the earth compared to the Gothic Spaniards—only the Moors were falling gradually asunder by reason of dissensions amongst the various races of which the nation was composed.

So the Christians grew bold as the others waxed weak, and though Fernando El Magno committed the folly of dividing his kingdom among his five children, it all came together again under his unscrupulous successor, Alfonso El Valiente, sixth of that name. (1173.)

Fernando El Magno was out and out the most powerful king that had reigned in Spain since the time of Roderich. He held an iron grip on the Moors, with great cities tributary to him. In fact, it was only the payment of heavy tribute which kept them in possession so long. Money was money in those days, from whatever source it came, and in the impoverished north there was little of it.

Fernando was a good king, according to his lights, upon whose conscience the murder of his brother-in-law Bermudo lay lightly. Had he not slain Bermudo, Bermudo would undoubtedly have killed *him*, in which case royal murder comes under the head of self-defence. So he reigned happily at Burgos, and had born to him a numerous family.

Doña Urraca, the Infanta, was his eldest child, a most excellent lady of good customs and beauty, the Infante Don Sancho, who was to make much noise in the world, was his heir, and Don Alfonso and Don Garcia were his younger sons.

Fernando put them all to read that they might gain understanding, and he made his sons knights to carry arms and know how to demean themselves in battle, also to be keen huntsmen. Doña Urraca was brought up in the studies becoming dames, so that she might be instructed in devotion and all things which it behoved an Infanta to know.

. . . . . .

But there is one fact which makes the name of Fernando remembered to all time, for in his reign was born at Burgos, Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar, known as the famous *Capitaino*, the Cid Campeador.

Beside the glittering vision of Santiago, the tutelary saint of Spain, in white armour, waving celestial banners, rises the image of the Cid. Encased in steel, he sits proudly astride on his good horse Babieca; a close casque on his head, under which a pair of all-seeing eyes gaze fiercely out, giving expression to the strongly marked features of a thin long face, with wildly flying beard. His scimitar hangs at his side, and at his waist, encircled by a leather thong, the formidable sword "Tizona" he alone can wield. A loose white garment or kilt floats out from under his armour, metal buskins are on his legs, and he is shod in steel.

Thus he appears, with mighty action, an *aureole* of power about him not to be put in words; "the

Cid" or "Master"—the terror of the Moors, the scourge of traitorous kings, marking an epoch and a principle, lifting him out of the confused chivalry of the Goths, and standing out clear from shifting details into the light of day.

Cunning, astute, and valorous, implacable in conquest, sanguinary in victory, he fought while he lived. A king in all but the name, and proud of it, boasting with haughty scorn "That none of his blood were royal;" "That he had never possessed an acre," "But that the city of Valencia had pleased him, and that God had permitted him to take it as his own." "Spain," he said, "had fallen by a Roderich, and by a Roderich it should be restored."

Now he is battling with the Christian king, then he is making alliance with the Moors, when banished, on his own account—to his own advantage ever—"*Por murzar*," as he said (to eat).

For in the midst of all his glory the Cid was practical at heart, and at all times, be it owned, a sad ruffian (though ever tender to his own), and more keen and cruel in a bargain than a Jew.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DON DIEGO LAYNEZ AND THE CONDE DE GORMEZ.

I WONDER if Burgos looked then as it does now?—a well washed, trim little city, Dutch in its neatness, tinted upon the principle of Joseph's coat of many colours, pink, blue, peach, and yellow; each house totally unlike its neighbour in height and shape; the streets sprouting out all over with balconies, *miradores*, and low arcades under flat roofs, an unexpected Gothic tower or barbican breaking through; entered by the ancient gate of Santa Maria beside the bridge with castellated partizans and statues of notables in flat square niches.

Of the Cathedral I say nothing, because the present one was built later by Ferdinando El Santo, but the line of towers of the Gothic castle stood out darkly prominent on the hill behind—Calle Alla, as it was called—as old as 300; the fortress and residence of the Condes de Castila, and the place where the bright-faced Fernan Gonzales lived his merry life, shutting up his prisoners—Garcia, King of Navarre, Doña Ava's treacherous father, for a year, and other kings and queens too numerous to mention,—with celebrations of royal births and marriages a score; the old church of San Aguedo, an "*Iglesia juradera*" (church of purga-

tion), on the brow of the hill, the family *posada*, or house of the Cid, to be seen to this day, the ancestral shields hung outside on pedestals forming part of the front, setting forth the quarterings of Laynez Calvo, of ancient Castilian lineage, the father of the Cid; a priceless old *Suelo*, on which you can still observe the measure of the Cid's arm, marked on marble; and the mouth of a mediæval passage through which he could ride into the plains with his men without being seen by the citizens in the streets below.

. . . . . .

At this moment "the child of Burgos," as the Cid is called, had thrown aside his warlike accoutrements, having been present at a council at the Ayuntamiento presided over by the king, and is now on his way to visit his lady love, Doña Ximena, the daughter of the Conde de Gormez.

As he passes along the Calle, gay as a butterfly in the bright sunshine, under the barbicans and towers which so nobly break the lines, it may be said he has too much of a swagger in his gait, but he has reason to be proud, for, young as he is, Doña Ximena loves him, and the good old King Fernando has admitted him to his council because he is already strong in arms and *of good custom*.

Just as Don Rodrigo has passed out of the Palace of Ayuntamiento (town hall) in the great plaza, its front honey-combed with sculptured cornices, badges and devices on a warmly tinted stone, two Hidalgos appear under the arched doorway talking loud.

"I tell you the king does wrong," the younger

man is saying in a loud voice—no other than the Conde Don Gormez, with flashing eyes, moving with a haughty swagger, a tall olive-complexioned Castilian in cap and plume, laced boots and ample cloak,—"very wrong in affronting the Emperor of Germany and the Pope in a little state like Castile."

"The king does right," answers the other, very determinedly, but in a feebler voice, for he is stricken in years. "What, Conde Don Gormez, would you have Castile do? Become bounden to a foreign power, when we have so lately gained our freedom from Leon?"

"I think the matter ill-considered," is the reply; "but of course you approve it, Don Diego Laynez. The king is old and foolish, and loves age and infirmity about him. No one exceeds you now in arrogance, since your young son Rodrigo sits by you at the council. He is reported of good courage against the Moors, but his youth makes him incompetent to advise the king."

"Conde Gormez," answers the other, reddening with anger, "your indiscreet words prove that it is not age or experience which give judgment."

"What do you mean, Don Diego?" asks the Conde fiercely. "I allow no observations on my conduct."

"I do not condescend to fathom it," is the answer, with a contemptuous glance. "Jealousy and thirst for power—"

"Take that, old fool," cries the Conde, silencing him with a sounding blow on the cheek, which made him reel backwards against the wall.

He could not speak, all his passion had vanished in the humiliation of being struck. White and

tottering he stood, while his trembling hand sought the hilt of his sword.

"Mother of God!" he says at last, "you had better have finished me altogether than put this insult on me. Is it that you deem my arm so weak you mock me, Sir Count?" And as he spoke, with difficulty he drew his sword.

"Perhaps it is," replies the other with an insolent laugh. "Put up your weapon, old man, or worse may come to you."

"No, no," returns Don Diego, the colour mounting to his cheek as his fingers felt the temper of the blade; "as knight to knight, who have so often stood side by side in battle, I demand a fair fight and no quarter."

"As you will," he answers, and an evil fire comes into his eyes. "It is a favour which, at your age, you have no right to demand. If you desire to be spitted, I will oblige you all the same."

And then and there he drew his rapier, and places himself in a posture of defence.

But the combat was too unequal. It lasted but a few minutes. The Conde de Gormez was the first *espadero* in Castile, in the flower of his age, graceful, skilful, strong; Don Diego is old and weak. His blows fell like water on his stalwart adversary, who treats him as one does a wayward child.

"Mark you," he says at last, throwing up Don Diego's sword, "I spare your life. Go home, you dotard, and teach your son to hold his tongue before his betters and learn to be a wiser man."

With that he sheathed his formidable weapon, turned his back, and with a quick step disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DON RODRIGO (THE CID) KILLS THE CONDE DE GORMEZ.

It was the hottest hour of the day, when the citizens made their *siesta;* the sun poured down in splendour on the white walls, absorbing the shade; the river was dried up.

No one had witnessed the encounter. But what did that matter? Conde Gormez would be sure to publish it abroad. Oh, shame and grief! Don Diego was for ever dishonoured!

Just as, with wavering steps, he was addressing himself to seek his horse where he had left him, he heard the clank of spurs upon the pavement, and his son Rodrigo appeared.

"Well met!" cried he, clutching his arm and gazing up wistfully into his beaming face; "the saints have sent you."

"May their blessing be ever on you, my honoured father," is the reply, as he stops to kiss his hand. "I was hastening home to tell you that the marriage is fixed, and that the king, Don Fernando, gives away the bride. But, father, are you ill?" noting his blanched aspect as his father leant heavily upon him.

"Rodrigo," he whispers, and with an unutterable

expression of despair he looks into his eyes, "are you brave?"

"Sir!" answers Rodrigo, drawing back his arm, "any other but you should feel it on the instant."

"Oh, blessed anger!" replies Don Diego, watching the deep flush mounting on his face, "you are indeed my son. My blood flows in your veins. I was like that once. Prompt, ready, dexterous. Rodrigo, will you avenge me?"

"For what?" asks Rodrigo, more and more perplexed.

"For that," returns Don Diego—and as he spoke his voice gathered strength and he drew himself back, and stands upright before him—"which touches your honour as nearly as my own. A blow, a cruel blow! Had I been of your age his blood would have wiped it out. But it is not with swords such an outrage is avenged. Go—die—or slay him. But I warn you, he is a hero. I have seen him in the front of a hundred battles, making a rampart of his body against the foe. He is—"

"Tell me, father, tell me!" exclaims Don Rodrigo, breathlessly following his father's words.

"The father of Ximena."

"The—"

No sound came to his white lips. As if struck by a mortal blow, Rodrigo staggered back against the sculptured pilasters of the Ayuntamiento.

"Speak not, my son," says Don Diego, laying his hand upon him. "I know how much you love her. But he who accepts infamy is unworthy to live. I have told you vengeance is in your hand, for me, for

you. Be worthy of your father, who was once a valiant knight. Go, I say,—rush—fly,—as though the earth burned under your footsteps! Nor let me behold you until you have washed out the stain!"

. . . . . .

The chronicles say that, insolent as he was, the Conde de Gormez had already repented of his furious act. Certain of the wrath of the king, who greatly esteemed Don Diego Laynez, and shrinking from the reproaches of his daughter, he was preparing to leave the city when he came upon the Cid.

They met beside the banks of the Arlaangen, which still presents the sandy emptiness of an ill-fed river, under a screen of plane trees whispering to the summer wind, the space without thronged with hidalgos and cheerful citizens in ample cloaks and *cappas* muffled up to the eyes, spite of the heat, in true Castilian fashion.

As Don Rodrigo, with lofty stride, approached, the Conde stood still, guessing his errand.

Of all the knights of Castile Don Gormez was a palm higher than the rest. A dark defiant head was firmly set on massive shoulders, youthful in aspect for his period of middle age, an approved and complete warrior at all points, and full to the brim, as one may say, of the chivalric traditions of the time.

Rodrigo beside him looked a slender youth; the down was on his cheek, the lustre of boyhood in his eyes, now dilated with fury as he drew near.

"Sir Conde," he says shortly, as he doffs his cap, to which the other responded with a haughty smile, "I ask two words of you."

"Speak!" is the Conde's answer, twirling his moustache.

"Tell me, do you know Don Diego, my father?"

"Yes," in a loud tone. "Why ask?"

"Speak lower. Listen. Do you know that in his time he was the honour of the land, brave as yourself? You know it?"

Nearer and nearer Rodrigo came as he spoke, until their faces almost touch.

"I care not," is the answer, with a sneer.

"Stand back in the shade of that thicket and I will teach you," roars the Cid, his rage bursting all bounds.

"Presumptuous boy!" exclaims the Conde with ineffable scorn; yet, spite of his affected contempt, the words have stung him, and he turns crimson.

"I am young, it is true," answers Rodrigo, "but once so were you. Valour goes not by the number of our years."

"You—*you* dare to measure yourself with me!" cries he, losing all control in the climax of his rage.

"I do. I well know your prowess. You have always prevailed, but to him who fights for his father nothing is impossible. Come on, sir Conde," drawing his sword.

"Seek not so vainly to end your days," answers Gormez, laying his hand on the hilt of his weapon. "Your death will be no credit to my sword."

"Mock me not by this insulting pity," answers Rodrigo, "or by God I shall think it is *you* who are tired of living, not I." And as he spoke he struck the Conde de Gormez with the flat of his sword.

The attack on both sides was furious. Rodrigo grows cold with the thirst of vengeance; the Conde burns to cut off a life which rivals with his own.

But the sure aim of Rodrigo and his strength prevail. With one stroke of his good sword Tizona, he fells Gormez to the earth and plunges his weapon straight into his heart. Red with his life-blood he draws it out to bear it as a trophy to his father.

"Die! Lord of Gormez," are his words, wiping his brow, as he watches the blood slowly ooze from the wound to mix itself, a sinister stream, with the sand. "Alas! had your courtesy equalled your knighthood and your birth, you might have lived to see your child's children mine. Farewell, oh my enemy;" and he stoops reverently to cover the face of the dead with his mantle, reading the while with horror in the still set features the softer lineaments of his Ximena. "Alas!"—and his countenance darkened and he heaves a great sigh—"I am but Ruy Diaz, your lover, the most wretched of men! Oh! that I could lie there dead, instead of him! Ximena, oh, my love, will you ever forgive me?"

And sorrowing thus he turned away by intricate windings to mount the hill to the Suelos where Don Diego awaits him, seated in the hall, the food lying on the table before him untouched.

"Behold!" cries he, unsheathing the bloody sword. "The tongue which insulted you, Don Diego, is no longer a tongue; the hand which struck you is no longer a hand. You are avenged, oh, my father, and I—"

He could not continue.

With a loud laugh Don Diego rose up, taking in

his hand the blood-stained sword and placing it beside him on the board below the salt; then turns to embrace Rodrigo.

He spoke never a word, but stood like one stupefied, his arms folded on his breast, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Son of my heart," says Don Diego, "I pray you turn and eat. Mourn not what you have done. My youth comes back to me in you. Greater than me shall you be, and win back broad lands from the Moors, and be rich like a king, when I am low in the dust. Take the head of the board, Rodrigo. Higher than myself is the place of the son who has brought the sword of Conde Gormez to his Suelos. The place of honour is yours, and I will pledge you with wine." And as he spoke the old man rises, and taking Rodrigo by the hand places him above him, and with his own hand serves him with meat and drink.

Poetry and the drama in latter days have much dealt with the story of the Cid, and altogether altered it from its ancient simplicity.

Not so the chronicles, which depict the facts in the language of the time very straightforwardly, specially the chronicle of King Alfonso of Castile, surnamed *El Sabio*, written soon after the Cid's death. If not penned by the hand of the king himself, at least it is largely dictated by him, and not at all partial, for as King of Castile he deeply resented the rebellion of the Cid against his father Alonzo.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MARRIAGE OF THE CID AND DONA XIMENA.

THREE years had passed when King Fernando solemnly knighted Rodrigo.

It was in this manner. The king girded on him his sword Tizona, to become famous to all time, and gave him a kiss, but no blow; the queen gave him a horse, perhaps Babieca; and the Infanta Doña Urraca stooped to the earth and fastened on his spurs—an act of honour so exceptional even in those days of chivalry she would not have performed it unless Rodrigo was dearer to her than appeared. But if there was love on her side or on his, or on both, is not known, except that some words in the chronicles would lead one to suppose that the Cid honoured her beyond all women, and that the lady herself would never marry a meaner man.

From that day he was called the Cid Campeador. It was the Moors who gave him the title of "Seid" (Cid) or "master," so often had he beaten them, and Campeador, or *champion* in single combat, such as was Roland the Brave, slain by Bernardo del Carpio.

Specially he deserved these honours when he overcame five Moorish kings, who had presumptuously crossed the mountain of Oca, and were plundering the plains near Burgos. He took them

captive, divided the booty with his knights, and brought them to his mother in the Suelos on the hill with great honour. "For it is not meet," he said, "to keep kings prisoners, but to let them go freely home."

Like a practical man, however, as he was, he demanded a large ransom.

Fernando, who loved Rodrigo, endeavoured to end the feud between the families of Gormez and Laynez. Nor was it difficult. Don Diego, full of years, slept the sleep of death. The lord of Gormez was slain, and Ximena was left, the youngest of three daughters.

The age was one of war, and knightly honour counted as the highest virtue in a man.

So when the king called her to him in the castle, Ximena answered, falling on her knees before him, according to the love she bore Rodrigo.

"Don King Fernando," she said, "had you not sent for me, I would have craved as a boon that you would give me Rodrigo to be my husband. With him I shall hold myself well married, and greatly honoured. Certain I am that he will one day be greater than any man in the kingdom of Castile, and as his wife I truly pardon him for what he did."

So King Fernando ordered letters to be sent to the Cid at Palencia, commanding him at once to return to Burgos upon an affair greatly for God's service and his own.

He came mounted on his war-horse, attired in his fairest suit of chain armour, wearing that high steel cap in which we see him now; his rippling

braids of hair hanging down on his shoulders in the ancient fashion of the Goths, and in his company were many knights, both his own and of his kindred and friends—in all two hundred peers—in festive guise, streamers in various colours flying from their shields, and scarves upon their arms, each knight attended by a mounted squire bearing his lance and cognizance.

In the courtyard of the castle beside the keep the king received them sitting on his throne; the queen and her ladies and Doña Urraca, resting on raised *estrades* tented with silk, attired in brocade and tissue, lined with rare fur.

As he enters the enclosure which is marked with gilded poles, the Cid dismounts, as do the other knights, to do obeisance to the king and queen, but he alone advances to kiss the royal hand—a distinction which greatly offends his fellows, who were further angered by being dismissed while Rodrigo was invited to remain beside the king.

"I have called you, my good Rodrigo," said King Fernando, with a voice lowered to reach his ear alone, "to question you respecting Doña Ximena de Gormez, whose sire you slew. She is too fair a flower to bloom alone."

At these words Don Rodrigo reddened like a boy and hung his head.

So greatly was he moved who had never known fear that the power of speech left him suddenly, and for a time he stood like one distraught. Whether the eyes of Doña Urraca being upon him he was confused, or that the transport of love he felt for Ximena overcame him, who knows?

"Speak, noble Cid, I pray you," said the king at last, weary of waiting.

"It is for you, my gracious lord and king, to question *me*," was at last his answer. "Alas! her blood is on my hand."

"In fair fight," is the rejoinder, "as becomes a belted knight. But the lady already forgives you, and would rejoice to be your bride. I have it from herself. Nor shall my favour be wanting to you both in lands and gifts."

Then Rodrigo raised his head proudly, and his face lit with joy. Whatever tokens had passed between him and Doña Urraca, it was clear he had not forgotten his love to Ximena, nor questioned the claim she had upon him.

"In this, as in all else, I will obey my lord the king," he said again, making obeisance on bended knee. "Dear shall Ximena be to me as my own life, and my honoured mother shall tend and keep her in our house while I am away on my lord's business against the Moors."

King Don Fernando, greatly contented, rose from his throne, and bidding Don Roderic follow him, he passed into the great court of the castle, followed by the queen and Doña Urraca, already of great courage, and casting glances at the Cid from under the silken coil which bound her head. Not so hidden but that some of the court observed her, and remembered it later at Zamora, when the Cid refused to bear arms against her.

Within the great hall of the castle the marriage feast was held. The whole city was hung with garlands and tapestry, banners, flags, and devices,

as though each street was a separate tent; the people swarming on balconies and roofs, and the sandy plain outside dark with the companies of knights who come riding in. All the great names are there—Ordoñez, Gonzalez, Peranzurez, Vellidas, on fleet Arab steeds; some rich turbans also of the Moors to be distinguished in the crowd, for the parties are so strangely mixed that the Cid has many close friends among his enemies. Crowds of the common folk come, and retainers from the Castle of Bivar, each one with some story to tell about the Cid. From Las Huelgas, the royal burying ground and fortress, surrounded by walls, a mile out of the city—arrives the abbess, who takes rank as a Princess Palatine, attended by her female chapter, in the full dress of the order, all mounted on mules; monks from the Church of San Pedro de Cardeñes, the burying place of the Laynez, and companies of the Ricoshombres from the adjacent cities, trotting over the hills—all disappearing into the huge gateway of Santa Maria to reach the *Calle Alta*, where the procession is to be formed.

The first to appear is the Bishop of Palencia on a mule. He is followed by the Cid, decked in his bridal state, under a trellis-work of green branches, held up by the lances and scimitars he had taken from the Moors, his own troop of true men with him, friends and kinsmen—all dressed in one colour, and shining in new armour.

As he passes olive branches and rushes are laid upon the streets, ladies fling posies and wreaths, and bulls are led before with gilded horns, covered with rich housings. The court

fool follows in cap and bells, his parti-coloured legs astride an ass. A harmless devil comes after, horned and hoofed, hired to frighten the women, and crowds of captive maidens dance to cymbals and flutes. The Queen Doña Sancha walks next, wearing her crown and a "fur pall," attended by her ladies and dueñas, but the name of Doña Urraca nowhere occurs.

Then, hand in hand with the smiling king, comes Ximena; "the king always talking," as the ballad says, but Ximena holding down her head. "It is better to be silent than meaningless," she said.

Upon her fall showers of yellow wheat. Every shooter, young and old, makes her his mark. From her white shoulders and breast the king picks it off. "A fine thing to be a king," laughs the fool, "but I would rather be a grain."

In the Gothic Church of San Agueda, close on the hill, the nuptial knot is tied. After which the king does them great honour at the feast, conferring on them many noble gifts and adding to the lands of the Cid more than as much again.

To his own Suelos on the hill (for indeed all these great doings were confined to a very narrow space) the Cid conducts his bride, to place her under his mother's keeping, and as his foot touches his own threshold, under the escutcheon of his race, he pauses and kisses her on the cheek. "By the love I bear you, dear Ximena, I swear that I will never set eyes on you again until I have won five pitched battles against the Moors." Again he kisses her, drying her tears; then went out to the frontier of Aragon, taking with him his trusty knights.

CHAPTER XXX.

DEATH OF KING FERNANDO—DONA URRACA AT ZAMORA.

AFTER this there was a great change. The good king Fernando fell ill with the malady of which he died. For three days he lay on his bed lamenting in pain; on the fourth, at the hour of *sexte*, he called to him his son Don Sancho, and recommended him to the Cid, to give him good counsel, and not to go against his will, which was to divide the kingdom into three parts, a most unaccountable act, seeing that all his life he had been fighting to maintain it united.

With Don Sancho came the other infantes, Alfonso and Garcia, and stood round his bed—all three comely youths, and very expert in knightly exercises, but as yet too young to carry a beard. Alfonso and Garcia were well contented with their kingdom, but Don Sancho, the eldest, was wrath against his father, and already turned in his mind how he could overcome his brothers and possess Castile and Leon alone.

Fernando, suffering great anguish, had turned his face to the wall to die, when his daughter Doña Urraca came rushing in.

"Oh, father!" cries she, kissing his hand, "if God had not laid his hand upon you, and brought

you to this death hour, I should reproach you bitterly. It is well known you have meted out your kingdom between my three brothers. To me alone you give nothing. Why should your daughter be left to be blown like a waif before the wind? Whither can I fly? Shall I address myself to the Moors for protection? A fine sight, indeed, will it be to see a king's daughter brought to such a pass!"

Now Doña Urraca was a princess of great presence and power in her speech. Her words were cutting, and they roused even the dying king. Slowly he turns on his side to look at her, and though his lips were already livid his eyes show he understands; thrice he essayed to speak; at last, between pangs of mortal pain, the words came forth:—

"Cease, Urraca, cease; a noble mother bore you, but a churlish slave gave you milk. Take Zamora for your portion; may my curse fall on any of your brothers who take it from you."

"Swear to me, my sons."

"Amen," answers Don Alfonso heartily, for he loved his sister. Don Garcia, the youngest, repeated the same; only Don Sancho moved his lips, but no word came.

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Zamora *la ben cercada*, a Moorish fortress as the name indicates, lately conquered by Fernando, stands on the river Duero, which flows away to the west through a beautifully wooded valley, in the kingdom of Leon, between Valladolid and Medina. It was then surrounded by seven lines of walls, with deep moats between. From the bridge by the city walls is still to be seen the ruins of the palace of

Doña Urraca, with her likeness, a mutilated head in a niche over the gateway, and the inscription, "*Afuera Afuera Rodrigò el soberbio Castellano.*"

Within her council chamber sits the Infanta, the white coif of a queen under a Gothic crown on her auburn head and long robes of black about her stately form. She is accustomed to the calm majesty of state, but her blue eyes shine with wonderful lustre, and, spite of herself, her fingers move nervously on the rich carving of her chair. The Cid Campeador is coming, sent by her brother Don Sancho, who is encamped outside, and has ridden three times round the walls to study the defences, attended by his knights.

For no sooner was the breath out of his father's body than he attacked his brothers, and now he is come to take Zamora.

With Doña Urraca in the council chamber are Don Pero Anonras, Don Vellido and Dolfos, a knight of no good fame, but devoted to her service.

The Cid enters in full armour, a green feather in his casque. His face had lost the sweetness of youth, and is hard and thin, the nose arched and prominent as he advanced in life, and his eyes of such searching pierceness that he terrified his enemies before he drew his sword.

Not now; for as the Infanta hastens to the door to greet him, and he sinks on one knee to kiss her dimpled hand, his face melts into the most winning softness, and he smiles on her as she leads him to the *estrade*, enclosed by golden bannisters, within which her chair of state is placed.

"Now, Cid," says Doña Urraca, when they had

seated themselves, "what is my brother about to do? All Spain is in arms. Is it against the Moors or the Christians?"

"Lady," he answers—and the tone of his voice is wonderfully subdued—"the king your brother sends to greet you by me. He beseeches you to give up to him the fortress of Zamora; he will in return swear never to do you harm."

"And you, Don Ruy Diaz de Bivar, bring me such a message!" she exclaims, half rising from her chair, a great reproach coming into her blue eyes; "you, who have been brought up with me in this very city of Zamora, which my father conquered!"

"I did not want to be the messenger," replies the Cid, gazing into her comely face with a great freedom of admiration, "except that I might again see my Infanta, and give her some comfort. I strove with the king not to send me. How could I refuse him whom I have sworn to stand by? Better I than another man."

"That is true," she replies, "but I think before you swore to the king, my father, you had bound yourself to me."

Now this speech put the Cid in a great strait. He and Doña Urraca had had love passages together as long as he could remember, yet he had wooed another and married her, and the Infanta is still alone. The Cid was great in battle, but he was simple in the language of love. All he could do was to hang his head and blush, which made Doña Urraca very angry.

"Wretch that I am!" cries she, clasping her

hands, "what evil messages have I had since my father's death? This is the worst of all. As for my brothers, Alfonso is among the Moors; Garcia imprisoned like a slave with an iron chain; I must give up Zamora; and Ruy Diaz, my playmate, is come to tell me so! Now may the earth open and swallow me up that I may not suffer so many wrongs. Remember, I *am* a woman!"

To all this the Cid answers nothing. He is bound by his oath to the king, but his darkened countenance shows how much he is moved as he sits straight upright on the *estrade*, contemplating the face of Doña Urraca.

Then her foster-father, Don Arias Gonzalo, stands out from the other counsellors, and says, "Lady Doña Urraca, prove the men of Zamora, whether they will cleave to you or to Don Sancho." To which she agreed, and calling in her ladies to bring her mantilla and manto, she went out through the broad corridor of the palace in which the banners and the armour were hung, by the gateway with her effigy over it, down to the church of San Salvador; the Cid, as her brother's messenger, walking on her right hand.

The townsmen arrive, called by the voice of Don Miño, and thus they spoke:—

"We beseech you, Doña Lady Infanta, not to give up Zamora. We will spend all our money, and devour our mules and horses; nay, even feast on our own children, in your defence. If you cleave to us, we will cleave to you."

Doña Urraca is well pleased. She had a bitter tongue but a warm heart, and now it was touched.

The beauty returned to her countenance as she turns it on the Cid, the stately beauty of royalty to which no lower born can attain.

"See, Cid Campeador," she says, proudly launching on him a look out of her glowing eyes, "many kings would have envied you, who were bred up with me, yet you hold me of little count. Go to my brother, and entreat him to leave me alone. I would rather die with these men in Zamora than live elsewhere. Tell him what you have seen and heard, and may God speed you on the way." With which answer the Cid departs.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DON ALFONSO BANISHES THE CID.

Don Sancho was young. He was arrogant. He had already crowned himself king of the three kingdoms, and believed he was invincible. As the Cid enters his tent and delivers Doña Urraca's message, he turns upon him savagely.

"This is your counsel!" he cries. "Oh, Cid, such courage does not belong to a woman! My sister defies me because you were bred up with her, and because—"

What more Don Sancho might have said, remained unspoken, for the Cid broke in with a terrible oath,—

"It is false. I have served you faithfully, according to my word. But I declare I will not take arms against the Infanta, nor against the city of Zamora, because of the days that are past."

"Traitor!" shouts Don Sancho, incensed beyond all bounds. If it were not for my father, I would order you this instant to be hanged!"

"It is not your father's desires, but your own use for me which restrains you, Don Sancho. Have you not two brothers alive? And who shall gainsay me if I place one of them on the throne?"

Without another word the Cid turned and left the tent, and calling to him his kinsmen and friends, rides out of the camp towards Toledo.

King Don Sancho, greatly alarmed, sent after him and brought him back.

So hard-pressed was Zamora, that although Doña Urraca was of a stout heart, she determined, by the advice of her foster-father and her council, as she would not willingly see all her people die, to retreat with them to Toledo, to join her brother, Don Alfonso, who was with the Moors.

Now this was exactly what the traitor Dolfos was waiting for.

"Lady Doña Infanta," he says, kissing her hand as she sat on an ancient seat in her retiring room debating what she was to do, signs of hunger and grief on her royal face, "I have served you long, and never had any reward, though I have seen you gracious to other men. But if you will look with favour on me, I will make Don Sancho raise the siege."

Now this speech, which the chroniclers give us word for word, would seem to infer either that he was a villain, who took advantage of her strait, or that Doña Urraca was not that faultless dame we would fain believe her to be.

Her answer, too, was calm, as of one to whom the aspirations of love were no strange matter.

"Don Dolfos, I will answer you as the wise men did the fool. Bargains are made with the slothful, and with those in need. I am in sore need. I do not bid you to commit an evil deed, but I say there

is *nothing* I would not grant to the man who saves Zamora from the king."

Again Dolfos kisses her hand.

Now it is well known that the king was treacherously slain by Dolfos, with his own gilded hunting-spear, outside the walls, believing that he had come to him secretly pretending to give Zamora up. The Cid, who was riding near, met him flying back towards the postern, and charged him with the deed, but he put spurs to his horse and got back within the walls. The Cid, eager to pursue him, took his lance from his esquire, but did not wait to buckle on his spurs, which was the only fault ever found with him in all his life.

Without spurs he could not urge his horse as swiftly as the other, and so he escaped.

Once inside the postern, Dolfos, in mortal fear of those within, rushes to the palace and flings himself at Doña Urraca's feet, drawing her royal mantle over him for protection.

But when her foster-father, Don Arias, knew it, he went to her and spoke:

"My Infanta, you cannot harbour this traitor, otherwise all the Castilians outside will accuse you of murder."

"What can I do?" she answers. "See how he clings to my robe."

She knew she had encouraged him in what he had done, and in the letters she had written, and fain would she have saved him. But Don Arias would listen to nothing.

"Give Dolfos up to me;" and he drew him away by force, the poor wretch trembling all over, with no

strength to stand. "Come, Dolfos," says Don Arias, "be of good cheer; to please the Infanta, I will hide you three days in my house. If the Castilians impeach us, I must give you up. If they do not, you shall escape from the town. Here you cannot bide, for we are honourable men, and keep no company with traitors."

After King Sancho's death came Don Alfonso, to be known as El Sabio, to join his sister at Zamora, who had always loved him well.

A council was called in the palace. The Castilians, Navarrese, Leonese, and the Gallegos, being already his subjects, are ready to acknowledge him as king if he can clear himself of all knowledge of the murder of his brother.

The Ricoshombres, counts and knights, the prelates and chief persons have already kissed his hand; but the Cid sits apart. The image of his dead master rises up between him and Alfonso. It was he who had found Don Sancho by the side of the Douro wounded to death by his own hunting spear, which he dared not draw forth for fear of killing him outright.

"Now, how is this, Cid Campeador?" asks the new king, who, in majesty of person and of speech and wisdom, was much more like his sister Doña Urraca than Don Sancho. "See you not that all have received me for their lord except you? Why have you not kissed my hand?"

"Sir," answers the Cid, rising from where he sat, "the reason is this: all these present, as well as I, suspect you of having compassed your brother's death. Unless you can clear yourself, I

will never kiss your hand or acknowledge you as king."

"Your words please me well," is the king's reply, spoken softly, but rage was in his heart. "I swear to God and St. Mary I never slew him or took counsel of his death, and I will clear myself of the charge by oath within the Church of St. Aguada at Burgos."

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The ancient Church of St. Gaden or San Aguada, not far from the Suelos of the Cid, and where he was married, is filled with the noblest company in Castile; the Cid, towering over all, at the high altar, in chain armour from top to heel, his good sword Tizona at his side, and in his hand a cross-bow of wood and steel.

Face to face is King Alfonso in royal robes, his hand upon a painted missal beside the Host.

"King Don Alfonso," says the Cid, in his terrible voice, so well known in the battle-field, "will you swear that you have not compassed the death of my king and master, your brother Don Sancho? If you swear falsely, may you die the death of a traitor and a slave."

To which King Alfonso, joining his hands on the Cid's, answers, "Amen."

But he changed colour.

Then the Cid repeats a second time, "King Don Alfonso, will you further swear you neither counselled nor favoured the murder of the king, your brother, and my master? If you swear falsely, may you die the death of a traitor and a slave."

Again the king presses his hand and answers, "Amen."

But he changed colour.

Then came forth twelve vassals who confirmed the king's word, and the Cid was at last satisfied, and the knights also said "Amen." The Cid would have embraced the king, but he turned away, and though he had shown himself invincible, the king banished him (1081).

Then the Cid sent for all his kinsmen and vassals and asked who would follow him, and who remain at home?

"We will all go with you," answers his cousin, Alvar Fañez, "and be your loyal friends."

"I thank you," replies the Cid. "The time will come when I shall reward you tenfold."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CID BIDS DONA XIMENA FAREWELL.

WHEN the Cid returned to Burgos, men and women went forth to look at him, others were on the roofs and at the windows weeping, so great was the sorrow at the manner of his return. Everyone desired to welcome him, but no one dared, for King Don Alfonso had sent letters to say "None should give the Cid lodging or food, and that whoever disobeyed should lose all he had, and the eyes out of his head."

The Cid went up Calle Alta to his Suelos, but he found the door fastened for fear of the king. He called out with a loud voice, but no one answered. Then he took his foot out of the stirrup and gave it a kick, but the lock stood firm, being well secured. The only one who appeared was a little girl nine years old, who ran out of one of the houses near.

"O Cid, we dare not open our doors to you, for we should lose all we have, and the eyes in our heads. This would not help you, dear Cid. But we pray that God and His angels may keep you. Adios."

When the Cid understood what the king had

done, he turned his horse aside to St. Mary's chapel (at the gateway), and knelt and prayed with all his heart at the altar, then rode out of the town and pitched his tent on the banks of the Arlanzon.

At this time occurred his dealing with the Jews.

The Cid's purse was empty, and he must fill it. "Take two chests," he said to his nephew, "and fill them with sand, and go to Rachel and Vidal and bid them come hither privately, because I cannot take my treasure with me on horseback, and money I must have before I start. Let them come for the chests at night when no one will see. God knows I do not this willingly, but of necessity, and I will redeem all."

Martin Antolinez did as he was told. To the Jews he said, "If you give me your hands that you do not betray me to Christian or Moor, you shall be rich men for ever! The Campeador has great wealth in tribute. He has two chests full of gold. He will leave them in your hands, and you shall lend him money upon them, if you swear solemnly not to open the chests nor look at the gold."

The confiding Jews swore by Father Abraham, gave the money, and received the chests. They were covered with leather, red and gold, the nails gilt, and the sides ribbed with bars of iron; each chest was fastened by a lock, and they were very heavy, being filled with sand. The Jews came to the Cid's tent and kissed his hand, then, spreading a sheet on the carpet, they counted out the gold, and also gave a handsome present to his nephew.

"Let us be gone," whispered Martin into the

Cid's ear, not at all ashamed. So at cock-crow they started to meet Doña Ximena at San Pedro de Cardeñia. (In the chapel of Santa Isabel, outside the Puerta del Sarmental of the cathedral, is still to be seen one of these chests, called the "*Cofre del Cid*," clamped with iron and nailed up to the wall.)

At San Pedro the Cid found Ximena and his two little daughters. "Abbot," he said, addressing himself to the priest, "I commend my two little *niñas* to your care. Take care of them while I fight, and my wife and her ladies, and when the money I now give you is done, supply them all the same, for every mark I will hereafter give you four." And the abbot promised.

Doña Ximena and her daughters kissed the Cid, and she knelt down at his feet weeping bitterly.

The Cid, whose heart was tender for his own however hard with his enemies, wept too, and took the children in his arms, for he dearly loved them.

"My dear and honoured wife," he said, "cheer up, I shall yet live to give these children in marriage to great lords. Have faith in me, Ximena, whom I love as my own soul."

Again and again the Cid commended Ximena to the abbot, then he and all the knights loosened the reins of their horses and pricking forward to the Sierra entered into the country of the Moors.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ADVENTURES OF THE CID—DEATH AND BURIAL.

FROM this time began that life of knight-errantry which has made the Cid famous in all ages.

First he betook himself to the court of the Count of Barcelona, but not agreeing with him, passed into the service of the Sheikh Móstadri, the most powerful of the Moslem princes of Saragoza. At his death, which occurred soon after, the Cid continued with his eldest son, Montamin, and assisted him against his two brothers with prodigies of valour.

In five days he overran Aragon and harried a large tract of country for spoil, returning in triumph to Saragoza, bringing with him prisoner the Count of Barcelona.

"Blessed be God and all His saints," said the Cid to his followers. "By this victory we have bettered our quarters for horses and for men. Hear me, all you knights," and he raises his mighty voice, "we shall get nothing by killing these Moors. Let us make them show us the treasures they have hidden in their houses. That will serve us better than their death."

All this and much more was done, as the Cid said, "*por muzsar*." Enemies or friends, money must be had.

But the great feat of the Cid's life is his conquest of Valencia, where he was called to protect the Sheikh Yahia along with the Moorish king of Saragoza. Upon whatever cause he went (and the chronicles are extremely confused after he took service with the Moslem), ambition was his motive and pillage his object.

From Jativa, on the hills over the sea, he came down with his army into the *Huerta*, an unexampled garden, beautiful in all time: woods of palm and orange trees, fences of aloes and prickly pear, the glory of the Roman, the *plaisaunce* of the Goth, the delight of the Arab, who declared "that heaven had fallen here."

Valencia itself lies sweetly on either side of a river, the banks breaking into *bosquets* and gardens, with tall towers shooting into the blue sky. El Mignelete, square and Gothic, its rival Aliberfar, all points, minarets and domes,—the Zeca (bazaar) and Alcazar,—bridge, twelve gates and *tapia* battlements, turreted and machicolated, hemmed in by fruitful plains, the rich country studded with *posadas* and *quintas* to the sea-shore, about a mile distant.

The Moorish Sheikh Yahia received the Cid honourably, and gave him a great revenue in return for his protection. But this did not last long.

Seeing how powerful he was, King Alfonso suddenly claimed all his conquests as his suzerain, which led to further strife between them, Alfonso attacking Valencia in his absence with the Moors to gain it for himself; in revenge for which act of treason the Campeador carried his arms into his own

land, Castile, destroying castles and sacking towns. "*Make war and deceive,*" is his motto now. He had learnt it from the Moors, and acted up to it till he died. Still in his heart he loved the country where he was born and where he had left his wife and children, only that he hated King Alfonso more.

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On his return the gates of Valencia are shut against him, and the terrible siege began, the Cid attacking the city as cruelly as he could, and food becoming dearer every day, till at last it was not to be had. The people carried off in waves of death, dropping and dying in the streets, the Alcazar full of corpses, and no grave with less than ten bodies in it.

At last the gates were opened to him by his friend, Abeniaf, the Adelantado, in return for which he had him first stoned, then burned alive in the Plaza.

In these days one seeks in vain for the noble qualities of Ruy Diaz de Bivar. The only excuse to be found is the harshness and injustice with which Don Alfonso treated him.

Valencia surrendered in June, 1694, and the Cid at once bethought him of his wife and children, now grown up to womanhood, left in the Abbey of St. Peter, and sent his nephew Alvar Fañez and Martino Antolinez, with two hundred knights, on a mission to the king. He also sent money to redeem the debt of the chests filled with sand, and to excuse himself to the Jews, Rachel and Vedas, for having cheated them in his great need.

"What tidings bring you me of the Cid?"

asks the king (of Alvar and Martino), whom they find in the city of Burgos.

Then Alvar stood out and spake boldly: "The tidings are good, Sir King, but we come to ask a boon, for the love of your Maker. You banished the Cid from the land, and behold, he has won six pitched battles against the Moors, also the city of Valencia; and he places all he has at your feet, if of your bounty he may have his wife and his daughters with him there."

"It pleases me well," is the king's answer. "I will give them a guard through Castile. When they have passed it, the Cid Campeador will look after them himself. Moreover, I grant him Valencia and all that he has won as his own, to be held under me, who am his liege lord and suzerain."

Great joy was there at San Pedro de Cardeñia when the knights appeared, Doña Ximena and her daughters running out on foot to meet them, and weeping plenteously for joy.

"And how does my dear lord fare?" asks the gentle Doña Ximena, wiping her eyes. "In all these years I have had no news of him."

"Well, and safe and sound," answers Alvar Fañez, saluting her. "Be of good cheer, my cousin, for the great city of Valencia is his, and his heart's desire is to see you and have you with him there."

"Alas! what am I," cries poor Ximena, ever humble in her mind, "that he should show me this favour after so many years! God and the Virgin be thanked for his constancy."

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When they were within three miles of Valencia,

under the thick shade of the orange woods of the Huerta, word of their coming was brought to the Cid, who ordered that Bavieca should be saddled, and girt on his sword.

He was much changed. He had the same commanding aspect and far-seeing eyes, but his white beard was so long and flowing, it was a wonder to behold. No man ever put his hand on it in life but himself, nor touched it with a razor, and when he fought it was screwed up like a curl under his chin. Every gesture was imperious, as of a king. At that time, indeed, no king in Spain could compare with the Cid in power.

"Dear and honoured wife," he exclaims, as he embraces Doña Ximena, who received him on her knees, "and you, my daughters, come with me into Valencia, the inheritance I have won for you."

He led them through the gate called "of the Snake," then mounts into the famous tower of the Mignelete, now the Campanile of the Cathedral,—and in the clear transparent air shows them the city which lay at their feet, the green Huerta, thick with shade, and the blue ocean beyond, on which ride the ships of the King of Morocco, come to besiege the city, a sight which made poor Ximena tremble.

But the Cid comforted her.

"You shall see with your own eyes how I fight, and how I gain our bread. Fear not, honoured wife," seeing that Ximena's courage fails her, "my heart kindles to the fight because you are here. More Moors, more gain—"

The tambours of the enemy now sound a great

alarm, but the Cid smiles and strokes his beard, gazing fondly on Ximena, now a wrinkled woman in middle age.

"Dear wife, look boldly out over Valencia. All this I give you for a marriage gift. I have won it, and I will send the King of Morocco packing from whence he came. In fifteen days, please God, his rattling tambours shall be hung up in the Church of St. Mary. Pray God I may live for your sakes, and still overcome the Moor!"

Thus speaking, they descend the tower and enter the Alcazar, all gold and painted walls on stone and wood, in the Arab manner, with hangings above and below, purple and crimson, and rich cloths thick with gold and silver, and take their seats on benches set with precious stones, the Cid placing himself on an ivory divan like a throne.

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About this time King Alfonso and the Cid met at last as friends on the banks of the Tagus, a river of very rapid flood, where tents were pitched and many knights assembled.

The Cid knelt on the ground before him, and would have kissed his foot in the jewelled stirrup, but King Alfonso cried out: "My hand, Cid Campeador, my hand!" and embracing him said he forgave him with all his heart (the Cid still on his knees), then raised him up and gave him the kiss of peace.

Afterwards they ate together, and Alfonso proposed his kinsmen, the two Infantes of Currion, as husbands to the Cid's two daughters, Elvira and Sol. Very scornful and haughty young princes they were, who did not please the Cid nor Doña Ximena at all,

but the Cid dared not say "No," on account of the king.

The marriages indeed turned out ill; and the dames were afterwards affianced to Don Sancho of Aragon, and the Infante Ramiro of Navarre. The Infantes of Currion were dismissed and dishonoured for their crimes, at the Cortes held in the palace of Burgos, before Alfonso, the Cid sitting beside him, within the golden *estrado*, on the ivory divan he had taken from the Moors—a throne, in fact, which had served a sheikh—a great triumph for him, at Burgos specially, his native city, where he had begged in vain for bread and was forced to cheat the Jews to fill his purse!

The Cid was in the prime of life, untouched by the hand of time, lord of a great capital and of a powerful state—far-seeing and wise, heroically audacious in all he did, capable of love, yet tremendous in hate. "Our Cid," as the people called him, "*born in a happy hour*," none dreaming of a united kingdom of which he was to be the head, when he was struck in the midst of his career by the hand of death.

"Be you sure," he says to his household and his companions in arms, whom he had called together, "that I am at the end of my life. In thirty days I shall die. More than once lately I have seen my father, Don Diego Laynez, and the son whom I lost. They say to me each time, 'You have tarried on earth too long, come now with us, among the people who live for ever.'"

After this, having sickened of the malady of which he died, he called for the casket of gold in which was

the balsam and the myrrh the Soldan of Persia had given him, and he drank it, and, for the seven days which he lived, he neither ate nor drank aught else, and his body and his countenance appeared fairer and fresher and his voice clearer, though he waxed weaker and weaker.

On the day before he departed, he called for Doña Ximena and his nephew Alvar Fanez, and directed them what to do after his death.

"You know," he says, "that the King Bucar, of Morocco, will presently return to besiege the city; therefore, when I am dead, make no cries or lamentations, but wash my body and dry it well, and anoint it with the myrrh and balsam out of the gold casket, from head to foot; then saddle you my horse Babieca, and arm her as for battle, apparel my body as I went in life against the Moors, and set me on her back, and tie me fast, so as not to fall, and fix my good sword Tizona in my hand, and when thus accoutred lead me out against the king, whom God has delivered into my hands."

Three days after the Cid died (1099). On the morning of the twelfth day, when all was ready, as the Cid had commanded, they went against the army of the Moor and prevailed, and the dead body of the Cid left Valencia, on his horse Babieca, armed at all points, and passed through the camp of the Moors, followed by Doña Ximena and his trusty friends—taking the road for the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeñia, near Burgos, where he was to be interred; and the king came from Toledo to meet them.

When they took the Cid from off his horse and

set him on a frame before the altar, so fair and comely did he appear, Doña Ximena entreated the king not to have the body laid in a coffin underground. So King Alfonso sent to Burgos for the ivory divan on which the Cid had sat as king at the Cortes, and gave orders that he should be placed in it, to the right of the altar, and a graven tabernacle placed over him, bearing the blazon of Castile and Leon, Navarre and Aragon, and his own arms as the Cid Ruy Diaz the Campeador. There it was left for ten years, and when the garments waxed old others were put on.

In a side *capella* of the Church of San Pedro, five miles from Burgos, the square monument of the Cid is still to be seen. It is much mutilated, but his lofty figure can still be traced on the lid, wearing a coat of mail and grasping his double-hilted sword Tizona, the effigy of the faithful Ximena at his side.

Legend says that while the body was left alone in the church before being interred, it was visited by a Jew, who, wagging his head, contemptuously contemplated the face of the dead hero and his sacred beard, of which the Cid had said, "Thanks be to God, it is long because I keep it for my pleasure, and never a son of Moor or Jew has dared to touch it."

"Yes," said the Jew to himself, recalling all the cruelties of which he had been guilty towards his race, "you are the great Cid, low enough now, and that is your fine black beard, grey and thin, of which you were so proud. I should like to see what you will do to me if I pluck it." At which he stretched forth his hand, but drew it back sharp enough when, with a hollow sound, the dead hand

seized the hilt of Tizona and drew forth the blade more than half a palm. Down fell the Jew in a fit, and in rushed the priests, and lo! the dead hand still grasped Tizona, and the fierce eyes seemed to roll. Who, after such an experience, would dare to trifle with the remains of the Cid?

At the present time these remains are said to be deposited at the Ayuntamiento at Burgos, in a case of walnut wood, in the centre of a large hall, along with the skeleton of poor Ximena, still faithful to him in death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FERNANDO EL SANTO.

After the death of Alfonso El Valiente, which followed close upon that of the Cid, our Old Court Life brings us to the reign of Fernando El Santo, third of that name—1217—brother of that well-beloved Eleanor, Queen of Edward the First, destined to conquer Seville after five hundred years of Moslem rule, the first Christian king who inhabited the Alcazar.

With Fernando the shadow of a great king rises before us. He wears a high pointed crown surrounded by a glory, his face is set and stern, with the prominent far-seeing eyes of a prophet, his features aquiline and pure; his hair fair and curly, thrown back as if in an ecstasy, and a full beard covers his closely shut mouth and finely modelled chin. It is an essentially modern countenance for the time in which he lived, full of life and expression, only the stiff ruff round the long neck is old Castilian, and the heavy armour in which the tall, stalwart body is encased very different from the elegance in wrought steel and gold which was manufactured by the Moors.

Around him hang the ample folds of a royal mantle, a deep ermine collar descending to his waist. In one hand he carries a drawn sword, in the other the globe of empire and the keys of Seville.

Thus he is to be seen in a statue in the Cathedral of Seville, and in a curious painting by Murillo in the Library, the reproduction of some earlier likeness.

When not bearing arms against the Moors he occupied himself in burning them, for in religious zeal he was the precursor of Torquemada, the parent of the Inquisition. Indeed the malicious chroniclers insist that he was "*sainted*" for carrying faggots to the stake with his own hands.

Not an attractive monarch, though cousin to St. Louis of France, whom he somewhat resembles in person, and his emulator in crusades against the heathen. With this difference: no crime was ever imputed to the French king, who died tending plague-stricken Africans, while the record of much cruelty attaches to the memory of Fernando.

Not to be too severe on him, however, it must be remembered that from his time the Castilian Spaniards assumed the grave and dignified demeanour that characterizes them to this day, and marks them as a race at once loyal, valiant and sincere.

Fernando first conquered Cordoba, occupied the palace of the great Abdurraman, and actually endeavoured to turn the inimitable mosque into a church. Happily the Moorish architecture was too much for him; a *mezquita* it is, and a *mezquita* it

will remain, as long as horse-shoe arch and pillar hold together.

Cordoba conquered, Fernando turned his victorious arms against the capital of Andalusia, for call it as you please, Boetica or Italica, Seville was and ever will be the chief city of the south—still encircled by portions of the Roman walls, untouched since the days of Cæsar and Pompey.

There were seven suburbs and as many gates, and 166 castellated towers. Azataff was the Moorish caliph who held it, as brave a knight and chivalric a prince as ever drew blade.

At the mouth of the Guadalquivir, by the white shores of Cadiz, he held his fleet, and his vassals and troops were with him in the Alcazar. From the Patio de las Banderas floated his flag, a black crescent and a star on a yellow ground, and his turbaned body-guard thronged the walls.

Fernando fixed his camp on the low hills over Sancti Ponce. In such a world of flats as surround Seville any height is valuable, and he seized it. As the eye ranges afar, these olive-planted hills appear paltry and monotonous, but they command the city. At their base winds the Guadalquivir in many a graceful bend, otherwise the land is unprotected to the sea.

Not only did Fernando fix his camp scientifically, but he was expert enough to understand that to succeed he must block the river. A fleet of Castilian boats intercepted the Moorish vessels at the mouth of the Guadalquivir at Cadiz, and stopped all supplies.

Such were the dispositions of the Castilian king;

and as the siege drew on, and the Christian host gazed down upon the walls, great encouragement came to them from the visible interposition of the Virgin in many notable visions and miracles.

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One day, as Don Fernando stands at the entrance of the royal tent, casting those prominent eyes of his across the plains, and counting by the number of outposts in how many days he might hope to plant the flag of Castile upon the Giralda tower, rising so tall and graceful before him—he beholds a Christian knight with a companion and an esquire riding by the bank of the river below, carelessly as a man who takes the air on a fine summer's day, and loiters on the way the better to enjoy it. Lightly the knight carried his lance in rest upon his thigh. His vizor is raised over a bright young face. At his side hangs his sword, held by a golden chain; on his arm flutters a scarf striped red and blue, and the same colours shine radiant in the sunshine on the plume which nods from his helmet.

"Now, who is this young fool," cries Fernando in a rage, "who dares ride forth into the enemy's camp as if he were the herald of a tournament? Does he think that I allow my knights thus to sacrifice their lives? or that he has a right to risk it?" Then, as he watches his progress, always further and further into the outworks of the Moor, "Who is he?" he cries again. "Will no one tell me his name? Methinks it were well for him he had shriven himself before he started, or his soul will be the worse for it very briefly."

Before the king could be answered, a loud voice

shouts at his ear: "Ride, ride for your life, Garcia Perez of Varga. I see the gleam of Moorish lances near at hand. Ride on, or you are lost."

The voice that shouted was that of the Conde Lorenzo, the king's Jefé, who, coming up behind the king at that moment, and having longer sight than his, recognized Don Garcia's cognizance, a red cross and a green tree, and called out to warn him of his danger.

"Sire," says he, in a lower tone, bowing before Fernando, "pardon me, I see seven Moors on horseback. They are in ambuscade in that wood yonder. They have sighted Don Garcia, and are waiting to break out upon him as he passes. Therefore I warned him."

"Don Garcia Perez is it?" quoth the king, his eyes following those of Count Lorenzo upon the plain. "I could lose no better man. For die he will, as surely as Christ suffered on the cross. Blow for blow he will give them, but seven to one is too great odds."

As to Don Garcia, he was too far off to hear any voice, let them shout ever so loudly. On he rides tranquilly, as a lover to his mistress; but as if some instinct suddenly struck him, at the same moment that the Conde Lorenzo called out to him from the hill, he lowers the vizor of his helmet, crested by the wing of a black eagle, grasps the hilt of his lance firmly in his hand, and turning back to his companion, by no means so well armed as himself, and secretly recommending himself to every saint in the calendar, "The Moors are sure to be on us," he says, "it were well to make ready for them. Buckle

your girths tightly and take care they do not shake you from the saddle."

Instead of answering, Don Juan Attiz (for that was his name) set spurs to his horse, riding furiously towards the back camp, leaving Don Garcia alone with his esquire.

"Ha! ha! is it so?" laughs he, watching his companion as his horse's hoofs tear up the turf. "Better to be alone with me, Baldo" (to his esquire), "than to have such a coward at my heels. Hey! for Castile and Leon!"

Now softly, one by one, the Moors come creeping out from their ambush in the wood (there was no mistaking them now, the sun shone upon their round steel caps and their smooth shields), one by one, like Agag, "*delicately*," until seven Moslem knights place themselves across the path by which Don Garcia rides, the last one carrying a flag bearing the mystic symbol of an open hand, the same as is still to be seen carved over the principal gateway of the Alhambra.

"By Santiago!" cries King Fernando, anxiously watching from the hill. "Observe Don Garcia. The seven Moors are ranging themselves on the grass. Yet, to look at them, one would say it is they who are afraid, not he, he rides on so boldly."

"And so it is, sire," answers the chamberlain, his eye fixed on the plain; "I warrant their hearts beat louder than his. The Moors stand back in line, while Garcia advances. See, now he pauses, as though he did not see them—pauses and speaks to his esquire. My lord, you will soon sing a Te

Deum in the Seville Mosque, if all your army be as brave as Don Garcia."

"Did ever man behold the like?" replies King Fernando, shading his eyes the better to observe him. "Now Garcia is taking off his casque. He is wiping his head. He is calling his esquire up beside him. God be thanked we have such Christian knights! May the Blessed Virgin guard him, and bring him safe back."

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"Come hither," Don Garcia is saying to his esquire, taking no more notice of the seven Moors than if they were seven statues; while they, in their turn, mark with dismay the red cross and the green tree emblazoned on his shield. Too well they know that device, and when they see whom they have waylaid they wish themselves elsewhere.

"Come hither, the sun is hot upon my head. Take my casque from me and hold it for awhile; there is no need why I should heat myself with such a weight."

As he speaks, he lifts his arm to remove his casque, and behold, his striped scarf has vanished. "Alas! how have I lost it?" he cries in much distress. "I must have dropped it but a moment ago. Now, I would rather fight ten battles than lose that scarf. My liege lady worked it for me and bound it on my arm long ago, and there I have worn it ever since. Find it I will, or I will die for it."

As he speaks Don Garcia turns himself round in his saddle unhelmeted as he was, his hair flying in the breeze, and gazes eagerly upon the path by which he had come, a track upon the greensward.

Then for the first time he raises his eyes upon the Moors, seven knights ranged in a line, wearing green turbans on their helmets and carrying lances in their hands; and there, suspended upon the point of a spear, is his scarf striped white and red—a Moslem had picked it up and looped it there.

"Now, by my faith!" says Garcia, considering them with a frown, "these are uncourteous enemies. Folks say the unbelievers exceed us in that quality, but it is not so. They have come out to steal, these Moslem dogs. They shall pay for it. No Moor that ever lived shall ride back into Seville and call that scarf his own! Come on, ye thieves and robbers! give me my lady's token!"

As he spoke, Don Garcia falls upon them and hacks and hews them with such deadly blows right and left, that ere much time is passed such as are not dead are scouring the plain to Seville.

Fernando, watching anxiously from the hill, still sees Don Garcia on the plain. Again he is alone, now he is fastening the scarf, which his esquire has unloosed from the Moorish spear, securely upon his arm. Then, humming a roundelay, he girds his sword, streaming with blood, upon his thigh, and turning his horse's head towards the Christian camp, rides gaily up the hill, four green turbaned heads dangling from his saddle-bow.

Meanwhile the Jefé is telling the king a pleasant tale of Don Garcia's brother, Don Diego de Varga, who, having snapped his sword in the heat of an engagement outside Xerez, tore up by the roots a wild olive tree, and laid about him with such fury among the Moors, that to this day he

is known by the name of "*El Machuca*" (the Pounder).

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For sixteen months the Caliph Azataff gallantly defended the walls of Seville, but before an army of such chivalric knights and a king prepared for canonization, what city could hope to stand?

On the 23rd November (*el dia de San Clemente*) the strong fortress of the Alcazar is stormed and Azataff capitulates. Then, amid an incredible blare of trumpets and fifes, ringing of bells and beating of drums, King Fernando, in a suit of fine steel armour, a royal crown of wrought gold encircling his casque, and mounted on a graceful Andalusian charger caparisoned with silver housings, enters the gate nearest to the river on the north, from henceforth to be known as "La Puerta del Trionfo." By his side rides Don Garcia de Varga and his brother Don Diego (whom it is said the immortal Don Quixote de la Mancha chose as his model for tearing up the wild oak-tree, and which act of valour he proposed to perform equally), the Conde Lorenzo, the Lord of Haro, Pelayo Correa, the Master of Santiago, and many other champions of the times.

Over Fernando's head waves the banner of Castile, the Golden Castle and the Lion of Leon, his hand resting upon the hilt of that same iron sword, still to be seen in the sacristy at Seville, and fixed on his saddle-bow a small ivory statue of the Virgen de los Reyes, which accompanied him everywhere.

The procession is superb. First, men-at-arms

bearing the escutcheons of the twin kingdoms he rules and the black standards and flags captured from the Moors, a long string of swarthy prisoners following bare-headed—the greatest humiliation an Arab can endure ; other banners floating in the sun, heralds in golden tabards proclaiming with a loud voice the feats of arms accomplished during the siege ; bowmen, *pursuivants*, knights and esquires in squadrons behind, with gleaming spears and glistening targets, mounted on proudly prancing war-horses, a sheet of mail.

As Fernando passes the drawbridge, marked now by a sensible depression in the road (for the Puerta del Trionfo disappeared in the last revolution, and the fosse is filled up), a cup of rock-crystal is presented to him under an Arab arch by the Christian citizens, filled to the brim with golden Xerez wine. This he quaffs to the health of his victorious army, turning himself around in his saddle-bow so that all may see.

"Castile ! Castile ! Leon to the rescue ! Viva el Rey Fernando ! Viva el Cristo Deo ! " come ringing through the air from every Christian throat of mailed warriors and tried men-at-arms. Their arms and hands are weary from the toil, but their hearts make merry at the pageant and the booty in store for all.

Then two men, a Jew and a Moor, advance from the crowd, one an aged Rabbi, with a long white beard, habited in a Hebrew gabardine reaching to the ground, the other a young Arab of stately presence, fully equipped for battle, the nephew of Caliph Azataff, but without casque or scimitar—

both bearing offerings to the king. The Jewish gift is an iron key, bearing on the wards the words in Hebrew: "The King of kings shall open; the King of all the earth shall enter." The Moor also bears a key, but it is of silver, inscribed in Arabic characters with the motto: "May Allah render the dominion of Islam eternal;" and as the young knight offers it to Fernando, kneeling in the dust beside his stirrup, he raises his other hand to put back the bitter tears that blind his eyes.

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At the moment King Fernando entered Seville the caliph fled by the side where is now the *Hospital del Sangre*, near to the Convent of San Geromino in the fields, on the spot where the lepers had their ancient refuge.

Whither the caliph went no one knew, or if he died by his own hand or that of another, Fernando little heeding his fate as he passes into the city to take possession of the Castle of the Alcazar.

And there he lived till he died, and was buried in the Capella Real of the great mosque he turned into a cathedral.

Over the altar, placed on a silver throne embossed with the double knout of Castile and Leon, sits the little ivory image of the *Virgen de los Reyes*, given him by St. Louis—the same mediæval figure, with a glistening gown, hair spun in gold, and shoes worked with Gallic lilies and the word "*Amor*," he always carried on his saddle-bow in battle.

The Capella Real is a church within a church,

entered by golden gates behind the altar, where, under a richly incrusted dome, in a shell-shaped vault, lies Saint Fernando in a crystal coffin. The body is wonderfully preserved. On his head is the pointed crown he wore in life, and his royal mantle is wrapped about his loins. On one side lies the sword with which he fought his way into Toledo and Seville, on the other the baton of command. Beside him rest his son, Alonso the Wise, and his Queen Beatrice, and on a wall near at hand are the medallions of the chivalric brothers Don Garcia and Don Diego de Varga.

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The hour to enter the cathedral is at the *Ave Maria*, when the sun is low and its rays tremble on the burnished walls in irises of gold, and the great painted windows stand out in a pale light, alive with venerable forms of law-givers, prophets, and kings; the delicate curves of the arches melt into dim lines, and rays of yellow light pierce like arrows across the floor.

Then the sculptured saints seem to take form and live, the flying pipes of the twin organs to glitter like angels' wings, the statues in the choir to murmur in strange tongues, the many famous pictures which line the walls to grow terrible in the half-light, with dark forms of archbishops and priests, monks and canons long laid to rest in the repose of painted shrines, beside which deacons keep watch with silver croziers; and from the boundless gloom a burst of sound rolls forth like the thunder of an earthquake from the deep-mouthed pipes of the two organs, replying to each other as

in a voice of Titans—the rattle of conquering drums, the shrill bray of trumpets, the crying voice of pipes, and all the clash and clamour as of a battlefield.

On the anniversary of St. Fernando's death the troops still march in to hear the military mass and to lower the standard of Spain before his body, each soldier bearing a lighted torch. Once it was a company of a hundred Moors, bareheaded, who carried the torches to the royal bier, sent in token of submission by the Caliph of Granada. Could any conqueror wish for more?

CHAPTER XXXV.

DON PEDRO.

Oh! the beautiful south it is at Seville! Nothing can shut it out! With its glamour of all strange things in nature, story, and song; Moslem and Christian knights and lovely sultanas hung with priceless pearls, dead caliphs haunting blood-stained towers, shades of Christian conquerors and swarthy slaves, the curse of a murderous past, the glitter of a glorious present, the clash, the confusion. Arab palaces marble paved, heavy with far-off tales, and gates, walls and castles of nations long died out, yet with a poetic life still speaking!

The narrow streets, across which lovers still whisper to each other under the moon, the unshuttered windows, iron-bound, where Inez may creep down and warble to Alonso, concealed in a dark mantle behind the shadow of a wall, where roses fling curtains of perfumed blossom, orange petals scent the air, and southern sunsets spread sudden splendours in the afterglow, as the earth lies black under a sky palpitating like a furnace, till night falls and countless stars come forth to light a paler day!

Two things are most notable at Seville; the great mosque, now the cathedral, and the Alcazar. The Alcazar, inhabited by long generations of Arab

caliphs up to the time of St. Fernando, is still untouched, a Moorish fortress in the centre of the city, girt by *tapia* walls and castellated towers. Not a poetic ruin like the Alhambra, but a real substantial castle, reached through the *Plaza del Trionfo* by which Fernando passed.

It was again re-built and re-decorated by Don Pedro el Cruel, 1350, King of Castile and Leon, at the same period as the Alhambra, Yussuf, Caliph of Granada, being on such friendly terms with Don Pedro that the same Moorish architect wrought for both.

Passing an outer barbican with two low towers, the *Patio de las Banderas*, where floats the flag of Spain, a dark corridor leads to the inner *Patio de la Monteria*, where the portal of Don Pedro blazes in the sun, a glittering blending of red, blue, and gold, set on snowy surfaces of finest fretwork; painted roofs casting rich shadows, arabesques formed into Cufic letters, diapered borders parting into groups of horseshoe arches, and a Gothic inscription setting forth "That the most high and powerful Don Pedro, by the Grace of God King of Castile and Leon, ordered these castles and fortresses to be re-erected." The magic of it all wonderful, coming into sight as it does, rising tier above tier, parapet on parapet, in a glow of oriental colour, to a central dome cutting against the azure sky; the door a curious mosaic of dark wood, and on either side low marble benches, sunk into the arcaded carvings of the wall, where the young King Don Pedro sat to administer justice to all who came, while his dark-haired mistress, Maria de Padilla, watched

from above, leaning out of the central *mirador* (window) of her chamber, still used as a retiring-room for the Queens of Spain.

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One morning Don Pedro, taking his place as usual, surrounded by his alguazils, commanded that certain men should be brought before him whose arrest he had ordered as they were drifting down the Guadalquivir with the tide to Cadiz upon a wooden raft. His knitted brows and sinister aspect boded ill to the rough-looking countrymen brought trembling into the court.

"How comes it, fellows," asks the king, his steely-blue eyes fixed on the foremost man, "that you dare to come to Seville to cheat me of the dues on the timber that floats down the stream? Think you you will escape unpunished?"

"O King," one of the men answers, falling on his knees, "in what have we offended? We are four poor men from Puerta Santa Maria, incapable of deceiving anyone—much less your royal Grace."

"Liar!" roars the young king, starting from his seat. "Look at me. Do you not know me?"

"No, my lord, I have never to my knowledge set eyes on you before."

"You did not meet me last night upon the quay?"

"No, my liege."

"Come now," and a cynical smile spreads over his fair young face, "remember! Did not a stranger help you to unload a raft? A fellow you found sleeping under a boat wrapped in a cloak? Did you not wake him and promise to pay him well,

if he would aid you to land certain timber, so that you might start before sunrise?"

"O King, it is true; we spoke with such a fellow—mean, almost in rags—and he did help us after sunset to land some wood. We paid him and let him go, and the king's dues on it were lodged at the Torre d'Oro before we left."

"Villains!" cries the king, his features darkening. "A pretty example! This is how my subjects rob and cheat and lie. I should like to cut off your heads with my own hand. Know you that I was that *fellow* who helped you, '*that mean person in rags.*' Did you not say the night was dark, and that no man would see you land the timber and you would escape the dues? And did you not add that those dues were wrung unjustly from poor men? and that the king who slept in golden chambers would be none the worse if he lost them? And did I not tell you that my name was *Pedro—Pedro?*" Here the cruel boy broke into a mocking laugh, more terrible than threats. "Now I am that Pedro, King of Castile and Leon and Caliph of Cordoba and Seville!"

Then turning to the mutes, who stood with drawn swords behind: "Cut off the heads of these carrion and set them on the wharf, that all men may know me as I am, *El Rey Justiciero.*"

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Looking at Don Pedro, son of Alonso XI.—1312—(who was cruel also and made away with his enemies remorselessly)—he is not such a remote personage after all. He was contemporary with the Black Prince, son of Eleanor of

Castile, daughter of Alphonso, El Sabio, and four short reigns bring him almost into modern times with Fernando and Isabel, the parents of Caterina of Aragon, wife of Henry VIII.

The times were stirring when he came to the throne. The Crusades were not over, and the world was moved by wars, murders and pestilence.

Young as he was, under twenty when he succeeded his father, Don Pedro fixes the attention of Europe; the most prominent figure in Spain since the time of San Fernando, and as fantastic, brave, handsome and unscrupulous as a Castilian prince should be.

Yet it must not be forgotten that during his short reign he civilized the South of Spain by a close alliance with the cultivated Moors of Granada; that he loved the arts and industries in which they excelled, and during his brief periods of leisure from incessant wars, surrounded himself with all that was illustrious in the Mussulman race—still the mediæval depositors of knowledge in Spain, as the monks were in central Europe. As long as he lived he never abandoned these artistic tastes, and has left in the Alcazar a monument of exquisite architecture, which sends down his name to posterity with honour.

. . . . . .

In a small *plaza* not far from the Casa de Pilatos, popularly believed to have been constructed on the model of the Proconsular Palace at Jerusalem in which Pilate lived, by a travelled ancestor of the San Sidonia family, a small bust of Don Pedro is let into a house wall.

From this we know him as he was: regular

aquiline features, with soft youthful lines, long waves of rippling curls fall on his shoulders and a low pointed crown presses upon his smooth brow. One hand rests on the hilt of a sword, the other grasps a Gothic sceptre. The place where the bust is placed is called the *Calle del Candilejo*, in the middle of narrow alleys unaltered since the Moors.

Now the story goes that in one of his midnight rambles, for he wandered about like the Caliph Haroun El Raschid, Don Pedro found himself in the *Calle del Candilejo* (of the candle), where he ran up against a *hidalgo*, who turned and struck him. Some say that he was a noted duellist, with whom Don Pedro had long desired to measure swords; others that he did not run up against the king at all, but that Don Pedro purposely attacked him. Anyhow swords were drawn freely. Neither would let the other go with his life, and both would sell their own dearly. At last, by a cunning lunge, Don Pedro ripped up his adversary and laid him at his feet.

Now, shortly before, the king had made a decree forbidding all fighting in the streets upon pain of death. What with love, revenge, jealousy, and robbery, so many citizens were killed that there were not enough left to fight.

What was to be done? There lay his adversary dead, and as Don Pedro gazed down upon his face he remembered that, according to his own decree, he had condemned himself to death. While he was wiping the blood from his sword, an idea struck him and he began to laugh. No one had seen the fight, no one could identify him. What an excellent occasion this would be of showing the careless-

ness of the Alcaide. If the Alcaide had done his duty and put guards about, such a thing could not have happened. Further, if the Alcaide could not discover him as the living man, he, Don Pedro, would have the pleasure of wringing off his neck. Altogether he returned to the Alcazar in high good humour.

The first thing he did next morning was to summon the Alcaide. "Sir Alcaide," said he, leading him by the hand to a seat on his own divan, "I have called you to inquire whether any miscreant has dared to transgress my law against street-fighting. In these unsettled times it is needful that the king should be obeyed."

"My lord," replied the Alcaide, not altogether reassured by the king's manner, too gracious to be sincere, "I am not aware that anyone has offended."

"Ha! say you so? Are you sure? For remember, if any fighting takes place within the city and the survivor escapes, I shall hold you responsible for the blood that is shed."

At this the Alcaide grew very grave. He was quite aware that Don Pedro would be as good as his word, and trembled lest some hidden motive was prompting him. Nor was he left long in doubt. Before he could reply a Moorish page entered, bearing a paper on a silver salver, which no sooner had the king glanced at, than, starting to his feet, he swore a big oath.

"What," he cries, "while you, Alcaide, are come here to lie and cringe, a more faithful servant warns me that a dead body was found last night in the *plaza* behind Pilatos' house!"

"Sire," replies the Alcaide, "if it be so, you have good reason to reproach me."

"*If!*" shouts the king in a well simulated rage. "Do you dare to doubt *me?* Now, to teach you your duty, I warn you that if the criminal is not found in two days, you yourself shall hang in his place."

The feelings of the Alcaide, a comfortable man with a wife and family, may be imagined. No sooner did he reach the Ayuntamiento than he found that a fight had really taken place, and a dead body been discovered. But alas! no one could give him the slightest clue. No one had seen the fight; no one knew the survivor.

At last, on the evening of the second day, when in sheer despair he had taken leave of his wife and children and sent for his confessor, an old woman looking like a witch, was shown into his presence, and astonished him by declaring that she could name the man. But what with his impatience and the breathless state of the old woman it was some time before he could get her to explain.

At last she spoke. "I had just fastened my door and was going upstairs, for it was late, when I heard a great clatter of swords at the opening of the *Calle.* As the night was dark and I could not see, I lit a candle and looked out of the window. There I saw two men fighting. As one, or both, will be sure to want to be laid out to-morrow (for my trade is with the dead), I will make sure, I said to myself. One had his back to me, the other was *the king.*"

"*The king?*"

"Yes, my lord, and no other. He was in common clothes and wore a mask; but when he had run his enemy through he took it off, and stood wiping his sword. I could see him as plainly as I see you. In a terrible fright, I blew out my candle, lest he should look up and kill me also; but he was too busy. If I had not seen his face," continued the old woman, chuckling to herself, "I should have known him by the knocking of his knees. Everybody in Seville knows the noise the king makes when he walks."

The old woman dismissed with proper thanks and a liberal reward, the Alcaide presented himself betimes at the Alcazar next morning, arriving just as Don Pedro was taking his seat upon the marble bench outside his dazzling portal, to judge all who came.

When Don Pedro beckoned to him to approach the Alcaide smiled. "Well, sir officer," says he, eyeing him all over with an evil smile, "have you found the man?"

"Yes, my lord, and nothing is easier than for your Grace to meet him face to face." At which notion the Alcaide became so overwhelmed with mirth he had to turn away his face not to laugh outright.

"Is the man mad?" thought Don Pedro, "or is he mocking me?" Then a fit of passion seized him. "Villain," he shouts, "you have found no one. You are shirking to save your life. Unless the real man is brought here—"

"But, my lord," breaks in the Alcaide, "if you know who the real man is, why do you command me to seek him?" To which shrewd question Don Pedro could find no reply: only if he hated the

Alcaide before, he then and there resolved on the very next opportunity to cut off his head.

"Now," and the Alcaide looks the young king full in the face, "will my lord permit me to take leave in order to make preparation for the execution? I think you insisted on the third day from the murder, that is to-morrow? As you yourself will be present, all must be arranged with fitting care."

Then he called to him skilful Moorish artificers, for all the delicate work at that time was done by Moors, and caused them to construct during the night a life-sized figure or dummy, dressed in royal robes, to represent the king, a sword in one hand and a sceptre in the other. The next morning this figure was hung on a gibbet in the Plaza de San Francisco, Don Pedro himself being present, attended by all his court.

How he looked or in what manner he explained so strange a proceeding, tradition does not say; but when the crowned dummy was swinging in the air, the king called the Alcaide to him and said, "Justice has been done—I am satisfied."

Ever since that time the spot where the king fought is called the "*Calle della Cabeza del Rey Don Pedro*," and the narrow alley close by, where the old woman looked out of the window, the "*Calle del Candilejo;*" while, that there might be no mistake as to what took place there, a bust of Don Pedro is let into the wall.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FIESTA OF THE CORPUS DOMINI.

THE time is early summer; the sky an unbroken sphere of blue, as deep and smooth as a turquoise, canopying the blanched domes and pinnacles of the cathedral and illuminating with ineffable splendour the elegant galleries of the Giralda tower. No shade anywhere, on *plaza*, *patio* or river bank; nothing but a blazing sun, making golden motes; the thinly leaved palms scarcely leaving a reflection on the hot earth.

It is the Fiesta of the Corpus Domini. The whole city of Seville is astir, the procession is passing, Don Pedro following bareheaded, attended by Don Juan de Mañara, Ferran de Castro, Don Garcia Padilla, and many others, under a gorgeous canopy, and so delicately fair and flaxen-haired does he look, he is more like a young saint than a king.

Behind him walk the archbishop wearing a jewelled mitre, and the chapter in rich copes and robes, followed by the knights of the military orders of Santiago and Calatrava, the cross upon their breasts, armed *cap-à-pied*, with nodding plumes, each knight with his flag and cognizance borne by page and esquire; a magnificent procession, set off by the

sombre background of monks, penitents, choristers and chanting canons intoning the offices of the church.

Now all who have seen a religious procession in Spain will understand the splendour of it. The mediæval magnificence of the robes, wrought in plaques of solid gold and incrusted with priceless jewels, the brilliant glow of sacred banners, the sheen of the steel caps and armour; and above all the amazing glitter of the gigantic dolls (or *pasos*), larger than life, dressed in the most gorgeous robes, representing the Saviour, the Virgin, and saints and martyrs. To the sound of trumpets, drums and cymbals they advance in a blaze of tapers and torches, carried on platforms of wood, through the narrow streets, over which silken awnings are drawn from house to house, every soul present, from the king down to the last of *los pobres*, prostrate on the stones.

The Virgin first, diamond crowned, of gigantic height, with deep-set glassy eyes, one big hand ablaze with rings, raised in benediction; San Fernando, habited in steel, his helmet raised to display his glistening visage, his royal mantle sewn with the emblem of the *Nodo* of Castile and Leon; the local saints Justina and Rufina, who, refusing to worship the Phœnician idol Salambo in her temple in Triana, suffered martyrdom; San Tomas and San Lazarus, and the imaginary Santiago, as a heavenly knight, Protector of Spain, clad in the white mantle of his order, a broadsword by his side, and a glory round his casque, carrying the baton of command.

From the balconies and the *miradores* float

damask draperies, striped Moorish stuffs and wreaths of feathers and flowers ; fans wave incessantly in the heavy air, and long black mantillas fall over eyes lustrous under meshes of coal black hair—to the wild ringing of every bell in the city, led by the boom of the Giralda, and petards exploding as of a city taken by assault.

As the procession passes the stone balcony of the Palazio del Ayuntamiento, Don Pedro's mistress, Maria de Padilla, flashes forth, a dark vision of beauty, crowned with a regal circlet as though she were a queen, by her side her little son Alonso, dark-eyed as she is herself.

Such a sight causes the archbishop to tremble lest a speedy judgment should follow on himself. Yet, spite of the chanting and the prayer, the sacred *pasos* with their hard unearthly eyes reflecting, as it were, the horror expressed by the archbishop—Don Pedro at once arrests the procession, and with a gracious gesture signs to Maria to descend and take her place beside him. And so godless was he in the eyes of all men, he would have insisted, but for the confusion which ensued by the sudden stopping of such a crowd and the screaming and cries of those who were pressed together,—when, in the confusion, the glove which he carried in his hand, worked with the arms of Castile, dropped on the ground.

Don Juan de Mañara, who is nearest to Don Pedro, rushes to pick it up, but is forestalled by one of the chapter, a stalwart young priest, by name Don Jaime de Colminares. As he is in the very act, on bended knee, of returning the glove, a youth all

aflame with passion rushes forth and stabs him in the breast.

A gleam, a cry, a quiver, and all is over. Not a voice is raised, not a hand stirs. Even the archbishop is mute in presence of the king, but his pallid face and the terrified glances of the chapter say more than words.

Not so Don Pedro, who stamps his foot with wrath as he faces the assassin, the least moved among them all.

"Who are you?" asks the king, his voice trembling with rage, "who dare to assume my prerogative of life and death?"

"My name, my lord, is Emanuel Perez," is the prompt answer as he meets Don Pedro's furious glance with honest eyes.

"Why have you killed this man?" demands the king, maddened at his coolness, his hand on the hilt of a wrought dagger at his waist, while the archbishop and the chapter draw round to listen.

"My lord," answers Emanuel, falling on his knees, for the majesty of the king subdued him, "I had my reasons. Ask me not to speak evil of dignitaries," and he gazes round at the rampart of glaring eyes.

"Speak," answers the king; "the dead is silent, the living man must tell the tale. Speak, or tortures shall make you. Were it even myself you had to accuse, I command you, speak. The crime is public, so shall be the punishment. I live before my people."

Cries of "Castila! Castila!" come from the excited crowd. Caps are flung in the air and

loud "vivas!" come from the beggars and ruffians of the street.

Behind Don Pedro rises the Moorish arch of the Puerta del Perdon, a sheet of delicate carving, white as snow, framing his figure as in a picture. Above rises the cathedral, a gigantic pile of richly carved cornices and tier above tier of carved parapets and domes, the walls ornamented with innumerable niched figures, bosses, roses and stars. On one side of the street lies the murdered priest in his sacerdotal robes, the painted dolls on the other, the stately form of the archbishop between, his hands folded, his eyes cast down in prayer, the affrighted chapter gathering about him in purple robes, and behind the populace eagerly pressing round the king.

Then Emanuel speaks: "Sire, my father is a *zapatero* (shoemaker); I follow the same trade. We are poor but honest, no one reviles us. My lord, I had a sister," as the word passes his lips he quivers all over, and looking down on the canon's blood, which has made for itself a little runnel among the stones, he savagely stamps on it, while at the word "*sister*" a cynical smile passes over the king's lips and the majesty of his attitude relaxes.

"She was *hermosa*," continues Emanuel, not noticing the change, "*muy hermosa*. Everyone looked at her. She went to confession in the cathedral at the altar near the image of Santo Cristoforo, twice, three times—we could not think why she went so often—then she disappeared. We sought her everywhere, in the market, the stalls, the exchange, by the river, in the narrow alleys and at the gates.

No one had seen her. After some days her body was found in a deep ditch near the river. Then we knew the truth, and who had dealt with her. Of the foul deed and who had done it we spoke. Three days after, my father's body was brought to us, stabbed to the heart. Then, upon the wounds of Christ, I swore an oath to kill the beast who wore the robe of God to defile it, and I have kept my word."

In the tumult of his soul, Emanuel forgot the presence of the king, the crowd, the occasion, all but his passion of vengeance.

"And if the crime was so public," asks the king, whose attention had deepened as he proceeded, "and your father talked so loud that he was stabbed for it, what punishment did the archbishop and the chapter impose on the canon?"

"His punishment!" cries Emanuel. "Ha! that is just it. His punishment! *Por Dios!*"—and such a volley of words came he could scarcely articulate—"The chapter! Yes, the chapter held a court in the Sacristy with closed doors, the villains! and condemned him *not to say Mass for one year!!*"

"Then," cries Don Pedro, in his harsh voice and a bitter smile on his face, for the young man's courage pleased him, and his honest eyes, "I condemn you, Emanuel *el zapatero*, to pass one year without making shoes."

A loud shout of applause rose up from the *pobres*. Those near the steps of the cathedral repeated it to others farther off, the people in the streets shouted it to those at the windows, and these to the crowds pressed on the terrace-roofs, so that the king's justice was known to all.

"Yes, my lord archbishop," speaks the king, resuming in a moment all the dignity of the sovereign, as he turns to where he stood carrying in his hand the pastoral staff, a wonder of ancient workmanship—"Yes, my lord archbishop, and most venerable chapter, from whose ranks so notable a light has been extinguished, I have spoken, I am *El Rey Justiciar*. Rich or poor, prince or beggar are the same to me. As to you, Emanuel," turning to the young man, "I believe you are worthy of better things. From this day I name you a soldier, and attach you among the Alguazils who guard my person. Be as faithful for my honour as you have been for your own and you shall soon be promoted to a command."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DON PEDRO—MARIA DE PADILLA—ALBUQUERQUE.

In the upper story of the Alcazar is Don Pedro's retiring room, overlooking the central *Patio de las Doncellas* below, the soft echo of ever-bubbling fountains and runnels mingling with the songs of birds hidden among the luxuriant foliage of palms and fragrant plants.

But little in keeping with the harmony without is the carved door by which the apartment is entered, still hung with the heads of four unjust judges placed there by the king as a warning to evil-doers. It is a small and secluded room, cut off from the state apartments of the upper story, appropriated to the use of Doña Maria de Padilla, panelled with cedar, broken by coats of arms in red, blue, and gold shields, portraits of kings of Castile and Moorish caliphs, emblems and badges, gilt "castles" and rampant "lions"; the ceiling rich in carved rafters, dividing into deep compartments, ornamented with bosses and lozenges in the same bright hues, by which the effect of the dark wood is greatly heightened; sconces for candles and circles for torches also on the walls, showing that it is the habit of the king to use the room by night as well as day. Little sun

enters, and what does penetrate comes from lofty casements darkened by panes of painted glass, reflecting in turn on the deeply-tinted *azulejo* tiles of the floor, always so noticeable a detail in Moorish chambers.

In a dark corner a secret stair descends to the caliph's bedroom on the ground floor, an arrangement suited to the erratic habits of Don Pedro, who constantly comes and goes at all hours of the day and night and can thus enter without being observed.

He is seated on a high-backed chair with his back to the light, a mere youth in appearance—his stormy life ended before he was thirty—in which one seeks in vain for the murderous epithet of "*El Cruel.*" But as his face turns towards the light, the fair locks about his shoulders darken into a dull red and the blue eyes assume a strangely sinister expression. Opposite to him stands his great minister, Albuquerque. During two troubled reigns he has guided the helm of state through troubled periods of rebellion, Moorish wars and conspiracies. At the death of King Alfonso he skilfully maintained Mary of Portugal—his first protectress—as regent for her son; a difficult task, for as long as he lived Alfonso treated his mistress, Eleanor de Guzman, as a queen.

Astute and ready-witted Albuquerque has long understood the inherent cruelty of the young king, as well as his obstinacy. He had fostered his boyish fancy for his kinswoman, Maria de Padilla, the better to rule him, until it ripened into such an overwhelming passion that his own influence was

undermined. With good cause he curses the day he had brought her to Seville, specially since she has borne the king a son, and her enmity to him has grown into an open attack upon his authority. Now, with the knowledge of the queen mother, he has come with a proposition calculated greatly to curb if not to end her power.

Albuquerque is barely past the prime of life, but his thin, deeply-lined face gives him a look of age. His black Spanish eyes are turned full on his master. Too cunning to betray the intense anxiety he feels, only a slight flush on his cheek tells of his emotion. Well he knows the perverse disposition of the royal youth before him, and that the very fact of a too great insistency will only rouse him to violent opposition, specially on a subject touching him so nearly as that which he has come to discuss. Still he feels that what he has to say is of such paramount importance to the State that, spite of himself, the tones of his voice deepen and his manner acquires a solemn earnestness.

"A disputed succession, my lord," he urges, watching the effect of his bold words; "Maria de Padilla's children conspiring in every corner of the kingdom, as do now the bastards of your father, Enrique de Trastamare, and his brothers Don Fadique and Don Telmo. Have they not read us a lesson in rebellion? God alone knows what an arduous task was mine to prevent his naming his favourite, Don Enrique, to the succession, and shutting you, my lord, up in a monastery for life. Is Castile again to endure the same evil from which I have freed

it? Invoke not Nemesis again, my lord. You have suffered enough from the same cause to know its bitterness. Think what blood has flowed from that infatuation of your father's, and the death of Doña Eleanor still to be avenged by the great house of Guzman."

But here Albuquerque was arrested by such a sudden glance of fury from the king, he wisely desisted.

"Maria is my kinswoman," he continues in another tone, skilfully changing his line of attack. "*I* brought her to Seville."

Don Pedro listened in haughty silence. Dark passions gather on his brow as the well-chosen words fall from the lips of the great minister. At the mention of his children by Maria de Padilla he gave an indignant start and seemed about to interrupt his smoothly-flowing periods. But carried, spite of himself, by the weight of his arguments, he withheld himself; and, with darkly glancing eyes, silently assents, especially as the name of Enrique passes Albuquerque's lips.

The concluding sentence as to the disinterestedness of Albuquerque in regard to Maria de Padilla he treats with evident contempt. It is clear that sort of pretence does not touch him, for he well knew that it was Maria's determination to throw off her kinsman, not consideration of the good of Castile, which led him to urge any measure which would weaken her influence.

"Keep to the matter in hand," he says sternly. "I understand you press on me a royal marriage for reasons of State; you need not diverge from

that point. It is an act repugnant to me. Why not open war and an alliance with England and the Black Prince?" he continues, passing his hands slowly through the meshes of his long fair hair. "I know the serpent's trail is over Castile. I have crushed the mother and those with her, but the rest of the brood I could not reach."

"And you did well, my lord," answers Albuquerque with a dark smile. "A couple of Infantes more or less, ha! ha! Who cares whether they live or die but their mother, and she was dead? To wring their necks and send them spotless to paradise was a worthy deed. Would that their brothers lay as low as they."

"Do not give me all the credit," breaks in the king, mollified by this applause. "If ever minister acted for himself it was you. Who chose the guards? Who bribed the Capitain-Generale? Who? But let it lie. We will not quarrel over the spoil like low accomplices. The deed was done, and well done;" and with a discordant laugh he joins in the ghastly jest with a voice that froze the blood by its merciless cruelty.

"Yes, my lord," replies Albuquerque, "it is so. You will do well to rid Castile of the other traitor too. For if Don Enrique de Trastamare dies suddenly, or is *killed*" (here the astute minister paused as if weighing in his mind by what means the happy consummation of his death could be accomplished), "there is his brother, the young Grand Master Fadique, who would at once take his place, backed by the knighthood of Santiago and Calatrava, and be upheld by all your enemies.

It is the same blood, my lord, the same ambition then as now. 'The throne! the throne!' is the war cry of the bastards, and France is ever ready to fan the flame."

"True," answers Don Pedro, "I am surrounded by foes. If I am a devil, they have made me so. From my birth, my life has been endangered by their machinations, I and my mother also. Fadique is the best. He has a soft face and winning ways. He says he hates his brother. He may be a traitor," he continues, rising from his chair and pacing up and down the room with the uneasy step of a beast of prey. "What matter? I use him as a tool; though," and he suddenly stopped and fell into a muse, "there was a time, when my father was alive—we were boys then, playing in these gardens together—that he did somewhat win my heart, and I showed it. I was a fool then. But now, let us fight it out." Then resuming his restless pacing up and down: "Can I trust Fadique?" he mutters.

"Tush!" cries Albuquerque, moved out of his calmness by this unusual sensibility; "he will stab you first and then succeed you. The treachery of the race, their greed of power, is patent everywhere. The people speak of it in the wine shops, the beggars make songs and sing them in the streets, and the soldiers—"

"No, by God! Not my soldiers!" cries Pedro, quickly arresting him. "I will not believe it. Not my soldiers! They are true! Fadique may or may not be false, what matter? I tell you" (impatiently) "I use him as a 'tool.'"

"My lord," replies Albuquerque, lifting his deep-

set eyes upon his master, "although young, I perceive you are already skilled in kingcraft. Nothing answers like diversion. You have dealt wisely in setting up one brother against the other. In making Fadique Grand-Master of Santiago the jealous spleen of Don Enrique is fed and nourished. He has no position in Castile. But about that prophecy, my lord," continues Albuquerque —seeking to return to the important matter on which his mind was set, which Don Pedro was obviously seeking to avoid—"of which I spoke to your Grace. Do you intend to verify it by the lack of rightful heirs? Pardon me, my lord, I speak in the interest of Castile. As far as your Highness's pleasure is concerned, I have shown that I grudge not my own kinswoman Maria." At her name the king turns paler than was his wont and reseats himself. "Were I ambitious, I might scheme for a crown on her head and on her son's. But I appeal to your Highness if I have not ever preferred your honour to my own? But reasons of State and the unsettled condition of the kingdom demand not only that you espouse a great princess, but that her hand should bring a strong alliance."

"And the princess is called?" asks Don Pedro, with a sarcastic smile. "Doubtless her name is ready."

"Yes, my lord, the Lady Blanche, daughter of the Duke of Bourbon, and niece of the most Christian King of France. Repute says she is comely, and her great youth and motherless condition under a warlike father promises her submissive. What says your Highness?"

"And in my turn I desire to ask *you* a question, Albuquerque," replies Don Pedro, who sits in deep thought as sentence after sentence falls from the great minister. "When do you intend afterwards to return to Seville?"

"I, to Seville, my lord? I do not catch your Grace's meaning. Whenever the service of your Highness permits me."

"I would advise you," replies the young king, sardonically, "for your safety to delay it as long as possible. If you affiance me to the Lady Blanche, you will find a warm welcome from Maria at your return. What her revenge may hatch, you best know. I warn you. You are a bold man, Albuquerque. Better face a lioness robbed of her whelps than an outraged woman."

The grave Albuquerque laughed outright. "A woman's fury is a small matter, your Highness, and Court report says that you yourself hold it cheap. The welfare of my master is what I regard. If your Highness holds the obstacles as light as I do, we will have the espousals at the Alcazar, and Maria shall hold the new queen's robe."

"No, no, never!" cries Don Pedro, stung into real feeling by the remembrance of her he loved and the insult to be put on her. "If this is done at all, it must be distant and secret. *She* shall be spared the knowledge until all is over. I would rather lead a dozen campaigns against the French and Du Guesclin into the bargain in open field, than lend my hand to this matter. I a wife—a queen—a consort—what am I to do with her? Will she replace that other who nestles in my

breast?" and a look of love came into his eyes which softened them into real beauty. No one can tell what that hard face could express until that one chord was struck to which his whole being vibrated.

"The princess will bring France in her hand and peace in your councils. Your Highness is not bound to separate from—"

"Yes, yes, I understand; but would Maria's proud heart accept it? 'Peace in my councils and strife at my board!' I cannot undertake it. An older man might do it, but, Albuquerque, I am young, and though men call me *El Cruel*, I am also *El Justiciar*. Now that is not justice. She has borne me children. She is like no other woman—I love her."

"Leave my kinswoman to me, sire; only consent and I will answer for her. But, my lord, forgive me if I say that if you thus *half-hearted* enter into this scheme, you will bring more calamity on Castile, more war and misery than we have now to battle with. Women, my liege, are but cheap in your eyes as yet. But any wrong done to a royal princess such as the Lady Blanche, any insult, *any dishonour*"—the king looks up sharply—"would bring on us the whole power of France. Your Highness knows it," he adds deprecatingly, watching the king's grave face. "If done, it must be *well* done, or let alone."

"And who says *no?*" answers the inscrutable young sovereign. "Who says that I shall not become, under the Lily of France, the most adoring

of husbands; a very Hercules to his Omphale? Methinks the scene rises before me in the *patio* below—the daughter of France and I seated under the palms, Nubian slaves waving feather fans over us, lest any fly or insect touch her soft cheek, while your kinswoman Maria"—(here the king gave a discordant laugh)—"watches behind a screen, subdued and gentle."

Albuquerque frowned. To this, then, had come all his wise reasonings, his statecraft, his far-seeing policy; a jest, worse than a jest, a scoff in the mouth of that sardonic youth whose service he held. Well he knew him, and that once in that mocking mood no more was to be done with him.

Raising his eyes to the cynical young face which faced him, a low laugh still on his lips, somewhat of the contempt he felt looked out, spite of himself, and Don Pedro marked it and for a moment yielded to the influence of his powerful mind.

"Albuquerque, I will consider your reasons and give you my decision," he says, with a natural majesty of manner he knew well how to assume. "Until then, let this matter rest. As soon as I can ride I shall order my further progress towards Burgos. There we will hold a council as to the threatened rising of Enrique de Trastamare. He has many followers at Toledo and will endeavour to take the city and garrison. But my friends the Jews, headed by Samuel Levi, will take care of my interests."

The haughty bearing of the young king strangely jarred upon the feelings of Albuquerque.

After all, the discussion of the marriage might

be called (seeing his relationship to Maria de Padilla) almost a *personal* question, and that he had been and was acting magnanimously in the matter he felt to his heart's core. The ill-concealed contempt of the king wounded and offended him as it had never done before. He reddened under the mocking glance of Don Pedro, his eyes half in jest, half in anger, fixed on him as if reading the embarrassment of his thoughts.

At length, with a silent dignity no ridicule could reach, he slowly gathered up his papers, and bowing low craved leave to depart. "God preserve your Highness," were his words. "You need not be told I hold your commands absolute, but, Sire, as your servant, I once more crave you to remember the prophecy of which I spoke—'*To be stabbed and succeeded by his brother.*' The Gitano died for these traitorous words against your Grace, but still dying he persisted in repeating them."

"An excellent joke, a capital pleasantry! Adieu, good Albuquerque, God have you in His holy keeping till we next meet and you bring me some new command," are the king's laughing words, to all appearance as light-hearted as a bird.

And as Albuquerque disappeared under the shadow of the Moorish arches beyond the door, he laughs still louder.

"That parting shaft of his about the prophecy was not so bad," he mutters. "All the same, I wonder if it will come true. A man can but die once, and that his worst enemy should kill him is but natural and just. Still, most noble bastard, Don Enrique, we will have a tussle for it ere it comes

to that, and if the Lady Blanche strengthens my arm, why then, *por Dios*, we will marry her!"

How Albuquerque's project prospered will now appear; the present upshot being that it was secretly arranged between the king and himself to despatch his half-brother, the Infante Fadique, "the Grand-Master" as he was called, to Narbonne to ask the hand in marriage of the Lady Blanche, niece of the King of France.

A mission which prospered marvellously, seeing that within a month Don Fadique acted as his brother's proxy at their solemn espousals in the Gothic Cathedral of St. Just, the darkly-painted figures of saints and angels in the *flamboyant* windows of the choir casting down mystic shadows on the form of a pale young girl in the very bud of youth, kneeling at the altar beside a royal youth with the sweetest and softest eyes, his elegant figure set off by the magnificent robes of the Grand-Master of Santiago, so stiff with gold embroidery and jewels, on mantle and *justaucorps*, that they stood up of themselves.

END OF VOL. I.

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